



Johnson County Master Gardener Thymes



November 2023

Project Coordinators

Click on a name to email the listed coordinator:

1876 Coralville Schoolhouse

Karen Martinek

Butterfly House at Fairgrounds

Carolyn Murphy, Mike Murphy

Demonstration Garden

Chris Sedrel, Laurie Roehl

Downtown City Gardens

Linda Schreiber

Ecumenical Towers

Michael Hesseltine, John Weeg

Fairgrounds Beautification

Chris Sedrel, Laurie Roehl

Firefighters' Memorial

Barb Schintler

Hortline

Mary Starry

Hospice Gardens

Melanie Hauptert

Oaknoll Garden Project

Vicki Siefers, Deb Cassell

Plant Sale/Flea Market

Emil Rinderspacher

Plum Grove

Darlene Clausen, Lavon Yeggy, Carolyn Murphy

Rain Garden

Lavon Yeggy

Solon Public Library

Kathy Erenberger

Speakers Bureau

Megan Garrels

Thymes Newsletter

Melissa Serenda, Doug Geraets

Yard & Garden Info

Jackie Wellborn, Kay Mohling

JC Master Gardeners to Offer *Community Speakers Series 2024*

BY LINDA SCHREIBER

Johnson County Master Gardeners is partnering with Hills Bank to offer **Community Speaker Series 2024** on **Sunday, March 3**, from 1 – 4:30 P.M., in the Johnson County Extension Office, 3109 Old Hwy 218 South, Iowa City.

The JCMG Community Speaker Series 2024 program is free and open to the public and will be presented in person. Attendance is limited to room capacity and registration is required. Three presenters will be featured. At 1 P.M. **Natalie Ross**, owner of Ross Land Studio, will present *Designing a Natural Garden*; 2:15 P.M. - **Chant Eicke**, Senior Project



Natalie Ross



Chant Eicke



Zac Hall

Manager at Impact7G Sustainable Environmental Solutions, will address *Rain Gardens Enhance the Environment*; 3:30 P.M. - **Zac Hall**, Associate Professor of Parks, Natural Resources, and Conservation in the Agricultural Sciences Department at Kirkwood Community College, will speak about *Using Ornamental Grasses in the Landscape*.

Attendance provides MGs CE hours. Note: If the weather presents hazardous travel issues, an alternate date of Sunday, March 24, has been chosen. Updates and notices will be posted to the JCMG Facebook page.

Register at
<https://go.iastate.edu/WADMBQ>

MG Steering Committee Meeting

Next meeting **Wednesday, November 15, 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 December/January issue by **Monday, November 27**.

Seed Stratification Using Jugs

BY JOEL WELLS

Some seeds need cold stratification or seed stratification to enable them to germinate. In the fall after seeds drop they become dormant as temperatures drop and winter sets in. In the spring as the ground thaws and temperatures rise, the seeds break out of dormancy. The seeds shed their hard shell coat and begin the germination process.

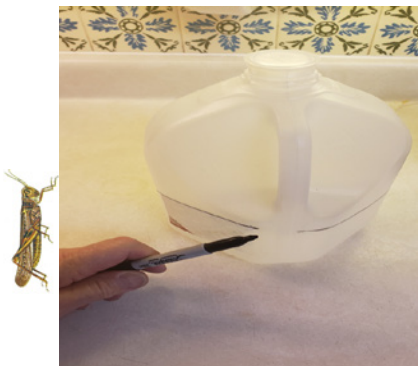
There are ways you can mimic this process in doors by refrigerating the seeds. Another way is to sow your seeds in jugs in January/February for sprouting in April. Put the seeds in moistened soil in a jug and watch them sprout as spring sets in. This technique is especially good for anxious gardeners who want to get an early start with their plants.



Step 1: Select jugs, wash and discard cap.



Step 2: Drill holes in bottom of jug or use hot gun.



Step 3: Mark then cut along line, leaving section by the handle uncut.



Step 4: Cut high enough to allow 3-4 inches for soil in the bottom of the jug.



Step 5: Use Sharpie to label bottom of jug seeds to be planted (this is important to know in April).



Step 6: Place paper towel or cardboard in bottom to allow for drainage.



Step 7: Fill jug with 3–4 inches of soil, sow seeds per package directions, and water.



Step 8: Duct tape jug back together again. Your jug becomes a green house.



Step 9: Set the sealed jugs in a sunny place. Rain and snow will enter through cap hole creating condensation. Spray with water if dry. Open the jug in the spring after the seeds have sprouted and protect them from late frosts.



Step 10: Usually in April the seeds will start sprouting. When the plants are big enough they are ready for planting after the last frost. A good rule of thumb is after Mothers day (May 12) but it depends on the plant and the weather.

Musings on the Garden

BY DOUG GERAETS

Last year's (2022) growing season I had a major invasion of tomato horn worms on my tomato plants. I must have picked off 30 to 40 and they did some significant damage to the tops of my tomatoes. They will devour major parts of the foliage and tomatoes as they feed and grow. They also feed on peppers, potatoes, and eggplant. If you've never seen a tomato horn worm (see at right!) count yourself lucky.

Those who have, know these worms can get 4 to 5 inches in length, as big around as a finger and can appear quite menacing (see figure). The worms are bright green



Tomato horn worm feeding on tomato plant

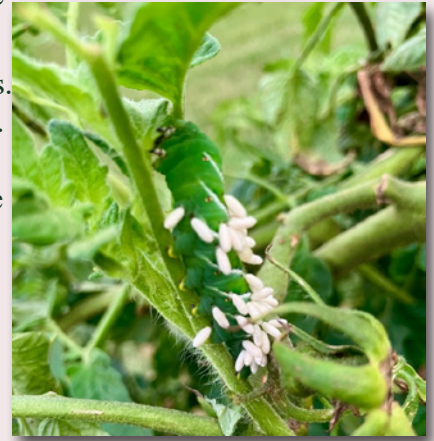
in color (making them hard to spot on tomatoes) and have an intimidating horn-like hook (either red or green) on one end. In reality, they are slow moving, grasp tightly to tomato branches, and look a lot worse than they really are. After feeding they move to the soil where they pupate and over winter.

The next year they transform into five-spotted hawk moths and start their cycle over again (see life cycle figure).

This year was entirely different (remember every year seems to have a personality of its own). Maybe due to the dry weather—who knows—we hardly noticed any damage from horn worms and I only spotted two worms during the late summer/early fall. Both of those looked like the enclosed picture. People mistakenly think these are eggs that have been

laid on the worm (I've been guilty of that) but these are actually pupa of the braconid wasp that lays eggs within the horn worm resulting in its death.

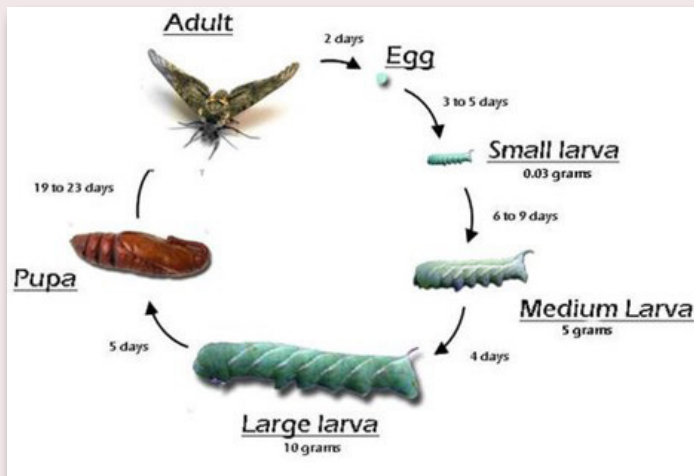
The braconid wasp is from the *Braconidae*, a family of parasitoid wasps. The braconids make up the second largest family in the *Hymenoptera* order. Braconids serve as biological pest control agents and in my garden served to help mitigate damage from the horn worms! I've included a figure of the life cycle of the wasp below—interesting stuff!



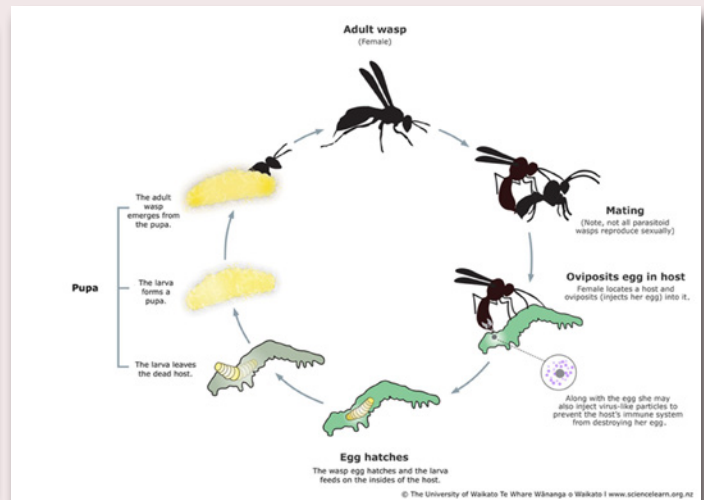
Tomato horn worm with Braconid wasp pupa

Sources:

- <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/tomato-hornworm>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braconidae>



Lifecycle of the tomato horn worm.



Lifecycle of the braconid wasp.

Winter Sparrows: Dark-eyed Junco

Junco hyemalis

Have you seen your first Dark-eyed Junco of the season yet? These handsome gray and white sparrows can begin arriving in our area as early as late September, but their numbers really ramp up in late October and early November as they settle in for their winter residency. Listen for their *tsk* calls and watch for the white-edged tail feathers when they fly..



Photo via Sycamore Greenway Friends

Plant This, Not That

BY LINDA SCHREIBER

Everyone wants color in their landscape, especially in the fall. There are numerous plants, shrubs and bushes that add color to your property. Sadly, our feathered friends have unknowingly carried seeds of undesirable plants into our forested areas and they are crowding out natives. Although these species are sold at local landscape centers and big box stores, you'll want to avoid these plants because they've become invasive.



Avoid these plants, trees and shrubs:

Trees:

- Amur maple *Acer ginnala*
- Black Locust *Robinia psuedoacacia*
- Callery Pear *Pyrus calleryana*
- Cottonwood *Populus deltoids*
- Lombardy poplar *Populus nigra*
- Mulberry *Morus spp*
- Norway maple *Acer platanoides* – self-seeding
- Russian olive *Eleagnus angustifolia*
- Siberian elm *Ulmus pumila*
- Silver maple *Acer saccharinum*
- Staghorn sumac *Rhus typhina*
- Tree of heaven *Ailanthus altissima*
- Weeping willow *Salix babylonica*

Forbs:

- Chameleon *Houttuynia cordata*
- Lilly of the Valley *Convallaria majalis*

Shrubs:

- Amur honeysuckle *Lonicera maackii*
- Barberry *Berberis spp.* – attracts ticks that carry Lyme disease
- Buddleia David *Buddleia davidii*
- Burning Bush *Euonymus alatus*
- English Ivy *Hedera helix*
- Japanese honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica*
- Mexican evening primrose *Oenothera speciosa*
- Running bamboo (monopodial or leptomorph)
- Scotch broom *Cytisus scoparius*



Plant these instead; these favorable plants and shrubs will add color and interest to your property.

Trees:

- Redbud *Cercis canadensis* – propagates very easily

Forbs:

- Clumping bamboo (sympodial or pachymorph)
- Foam flower *Tiarella cordifolia*
- Coral bells *Heuchera*
- Snowdrops *Galanthus spp.*
- White bell flower *Nolana paradoxa*

Shrubs:

- Blueberry
- Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis*
- Climbing hydrangea *Dianthus*
- Dogwood
- Elderberry *Sambucus nigra canadensis*
- Oakleaf hydrangea *Hydrangea quercifolia*
- Spicebush *Lindera benzoin*
- Sweetspire *Itea virginica*
- Weigela
- Witch hazel *Hamamelis vernalis*
- Yellow wild indigo *Baptisia*

Ornamental Grasses

- Side-oats grama grass *Bouteloua curtipendula*
- Northern sea oats *Chasmanthium latifolium*
- Little bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium*
- Prairie dropseed *Sporobolus heterolepis*
- Switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*

Sources:

- <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu>
- <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/garden-by-region/east-north-central/native-plants-upper-midwest.htm>
- <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com>



Project Updates

1876 Coralville Schoolhouse

KAREN MARTINEK, COORDINATOR

The Johnson County Historical Society held a few Coralville School classes at the 1876 Schoolhouse this week. In the picture below they are playing outdoor old fashioned games such as hoops and sticks. The class enjoyed the area near the pollinator garden and under the beautiful yellow Ginkgo Tree.



It was wonderful to see and hear the schoolhouse filled with laughter and children's voices. We are so happy that the Historical Society is making use of the Schoolhouse.

At right is a gorgeous view of the east garden including the heavy branches of the juniper tree full of berries.



Photo by Bonnie Penno.

Several MGs met this week for some final fall work before the freezing weather. We divided hostas and replanted them behind the schoolhouse in a shadier spot. A few irises were planted, and other plants were cut back or deadheaded. We look forward to seeing the efforts of our work emerge in the spring!

Ecumenical Towers

MICHAEL HESSELTINE AND JOHN WEEG, COORDINATORS

Ecumenical Towers: Phase 1 Success

Ecumenical Towers is a great site downtown to showcase what we do as Master Gardeners as well as work with the residents on what they would like to see. We have 3 phases defined to change the grass area in front to pollinator beds. This has all been done with the cooperation of the board and the residents:

1. Hügelkultur bed in front of the patio. This was to extend the current bed into the yard using a method that conserves water at the same time as contributing nutrients.
2. Raised galvanized steel hügelkultur bed on the edge of the patio. This will give wheel-chair accessible planting space for the residents in a very sunny area.
3. Water feature in the new bed to be water source for pollinators as well as water to the whole bed. This will be in place in the spring.

On October 15 we completed Phase 1. The "before" picture is the calm before the storm. We gathered our material over the previous week. You see (from left to right) compost, wood, manure, green material. Mulch is out of frame to the left. These piles were certainly conversation starters with the residents as well as passers-by. They were teasers to "watch this space." Our first lesson learned was to leave time for talking about the project – that is part of the fun!

The "digging" picture is us beginning excavation. There was great turnout which always makes it easier. MGs are the happiest diggers I have worked with, very little silence!

We had to remove some bushes to prepare for the raised bed, move the current water feature (the rocks in the middle) and dig out for the base of our bed. This digging was not fast. Like most of Iowa City, we had a layer of topsoil on clay. So the topsoil came off easily – the clay not so much. It took several hours to dig down the desired 2 feet.

Once we were deep enough we layered in our wood, manure, green material, manure and lastly we put the soil and compost mixed back in. It sounds simple but putting that soil back in takes longer than you would think.

By this time I was used up and this is supposed to be fun (remember!). So, time to go home. We came back a few days later for a short session to do final shaping and cover with mulch ("finished" picture). Now you see a nice clean slate — nothing but potential! This will settle some over the winter and we will plant native plants there in the spring.

Phase 2 is coming soon as weather allows. We want to have it done before winter so it also has a chance to settle. Phase 3 will top it all off in the spring when the condensation begins again from the building.

We were pleased the public stopped to talk speak with us and responded so positively. Many residents



Residents' curiosity was piqued as materials began to arrive before the work began on Oct. 15.



Master Gardeners turned out in force to help with the project.



The new garden sports a curved shape and looks great mulched.

watched from their windows — some came out to get a better look. It was worth doing just for the buzz but beyond that the new bed should be enjoyed and worked for generations to come!

Phase 1 cost less than \$40 thanks to all the cheerful labor and special thanks to contributors: Tom Isaacs for manure, Patrick Rossmann for wood, Linda Schreiber for canna stalks/green material, Jeff Walberg for wood, and James Weeg for rocks.

Plum Grove Gardens

DARLENE CLAUSEN, CAROLYN MURPHY, AND LAVON YEGGY, COORDINATORS

New seedlings planted at Plum Grove Historic Home

After several failed attempts to grow plum trees from seed, we have now succeeded. The timing must have been right as three of us (Carolyn and Mike Murphy, and Mahmooda Amad) ended up producing 12 seedlings.

After talking with Alex McKendree, the Johnson County Historical Society Executive Director, we received permission to plant six seedlings in front of the house, which will help sustain the number of wild plum trees already there. Betty Kelly, founder of the gardens, noted that she had started the wild plum trees from seeds she collected on site many years ago and she hoped when the time came another MG would do the same. We hope this grove of plum trees will be good for another 15 to 20 years.

Mike and Carolyn planted the plum seedlings in mid-September. Milk jugs with several small holes worked well to keep the seedlings watered. Next year we plan to buy watering bags.



Second Sunday Garden Forums 2024

BY LINDA SCHREIBER

Project GREEN Second Sunday Garden Forums 2024 will focus on gardening success, conservation practices and protecting the environment, and investing in trees for the landscape. The forum series will be offered on Jan. 10, Feb. 11 and March 10, at the Iowa City Public Library, 123 S. Linn St., from 2 to 4 P.M.

The programs—free and open to the public—provide opportunities for gardeners to gather during the winter months, dream of the spring to come and learn from area specialists. The presentations also stream live on ICPL's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/thelibrarychannel>.

Lisa Hinzman Howard or as she's known in the gardening world, Midwest Garden Gal, will kick off the Project GREEN forums series on Jan. 14. Her topic, *GIY (Grow It Yourself): Veggies 101*,



Lisa Hinzman Howard

encourages gardeners to adopt the worldwide trend to grow your food to know your food. The program covers soil basics, getting started with raised beds, how to expand the season to maximize your harvest plus unique ideas around vertical, succession and companion planting for growing veggies at home. Lisa's presentation eases gardening anxiety to help anyone—from pros to wannabes and dabblers—find success in their space. Using research-based garden education, she wants all gardeners to achieve quick success and find long-term enjoyment in the garden. Lisa is a Linn County Master Gardener volunteer with 20-plus years of gardening experience. In 2016, she founded Midwest Garden Gal, LLC. Her book, *Cheap Tricks Gardening: Cause You Don't Need to Spend a Fortune for Fabulous* was published in 2022. Signed copies of Lisa's book will be available to purchase at the event. Follow Lisa at midwestgardengal.com.

Author **Cornelia “Connie” Mutel** assembled a cast of premier Iowa scientists and environmental activists to write *Tending Iowa's Land: Pathways to a Sustainable Future* (University of Iowa Press, 2022). On Feb.



Cornelia “Connie” Mutel

14, a selection of these authors will introduce our state's current environmental problems and lead a discussion on viable solutions. This book proposes plausible efforts that could benefit agriculture as they create a healthier natural world. Connie edited the book's essays that trace Iowa's transformation from native prairies into today's vast agricultural fields. While this conversion has provided abundant food, fiber, and fuel, it has also created the environmental problems that today challenge our everyday lives: polluted waters, increasing floods, degradation of rich prairie topsoils, compromised natural systems, and now climate change. Connie is the author of over a dozen additional books including *A Sugar Creek Chronicle: Observing Climate Change from a Midwestern Woodland* (Iowa, 2016) and *The Emerald Horizon: The History of Nature in Iowa* (Iowa, 2008). Before retiring, Connie was a Senior Science Writer at IIHR – Hydrosience & Engineering at The University of Iowa College of Engineering. *Tending Iowa's Land* received the 2023 Midwest Book Award for Nature.

Geoff Mouming, Impact7G Sustainable Environmental Solutions, will speak about *Trees: An Environmental Investment* on March 10. Geoff is an admitted and unapologetic treehugger. Tree selection isn't an art form but it does take purposeful planning to select the right tree for your specific landscape. Trees are a true asset and one of the best investments a homeowner can make to increase the value of your property. Planting trees should be a priority to offset climate change and benefit the environment. The Project Manager for Restoration Services for Impact7G Natural Cultural Resources Division is well-known in the Johnson County area. For 30-plus years, he worked in commercial landscape management for a lawn and landscape maintenance firm overseeing prairie and pollinator installation. He also established and provided maintenance for corporate and institutional properties and worked with area service clubs and municipalities in multiple Earth Day/Arbor Day tree-planting projects. Geoff is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, vice president of the board of directors of Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development and the past president of the Rotary Club of Coralville/North Corridor.



Geoff Mouming



REMINDER: Record Your Hours!



To record your hours on the Volunteer Reporting System visit <https://mastergardenerhours.hort.iastate.edu/>. The final deadline is **Sunday, December 31**, however it is important to not wait until the last minute. Thank you for your due diligence and please contact Shannon Bielicke, bielicke@iastate.edu with questions.



MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

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

November 2023



100 Grannies

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

No events listed this month.



Backyard Abundance

<http://backyardabundance.org/events>

No events listed this month.



Bur Oak Land Trust

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

No events listed this month.



Eastern Iowa Bird Watchers/IC Birds

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

No events listed this month.



Iowa State Extension

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

Saturday, Nov. 4, 9 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.

FALL GARDEN SYMPOSIUM-WATERLOO. Do plants make you happy? You are invited to a wonderful day of listening and learning with other garden enthusiasts at the 2023 Black Hawk County Fall Garden Symposium! Topics include planting and care of urban trees, growing beautiful cut flowers, creating pollinator and butterfly gardens and more! Registration is just \$35 and includes speakers, handouts, a light breakfast coffee, a catered lunch, and snacks. Call (319) 234-6811 or email seilers@iastate.edu to register.

Sunday, Nov. 26-27

IOWA ORGANIC CONFERENCE. University of Iowa Memorial Union. The Iowa Organic Conference is the largest university-sponsored organic conference in the country, with over 30 exhibitors. Workshops range from new markets for organic crops to soil health initiatives and alternative crops. Registration: <https://www.regcytes.extension.iastate.edu/iowaorganic/>



Johnson County Conservation

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

Wednesday, Nov. 1, 10 to 11:30 A.M.; Sunday, Nov. 5, 10 to 11:30 A.M.; Wednesday, Nov. 8, 4 P.M.; Wednesday, Nov. 15, 10 to 11:30 A.M.

PRAIRIE SEED HARVEST. F.W. Kent Park. 2048 HWY 6 NW, OXFORD 52322. Helping

to harvest prairie seeds allows volunteers to take up an active role in the restoration of our county's native ecosystems, and all collected seed is used for JCC's restoration projects for the next year. The task itself is easy for all ages of volunteers, and no background experience is necessary. Some events require hiking between one and two miles over uneven and mildly sloped terrain. For anyone with mobility limitations, the Senior Seed Harvests are best, and will feature harvest options very close to parking areas. All locations are subject to change based on seed conditions. Updates will be shared via email with all registered participants. Events dependent on weather and dry seed conditions. Register at: <https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Johnson/Events.aspx>

Friday, Nov. 17, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.

COILED BASKETRY. Conservation Education Center, F.W. Kent Park, 2048 HWY 6 NW, Oxford 52322. Learn a technique to make coiled baskets from natural materials. Each participant will be supplied with all the materials required to create a small coiled basket we will make during the class. There is a \$10 fee/participant, due at the beginning of class. Registration: <https://www.mycountyparks.com>

JOHNSON



Johnson County-ISU Extension

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

Thursday, Nov. 9, 6 to 7:30 P.M.

JCMG MASTER GARDENER TRAINING IN-PERSON SESSION, WRAP UP. Johnson County Extension Office. Johnson County Master Gardener In-Person Session, Wrap Up class. Part of the Master Gardener 2023 Fall Training Program. All JCMG project coordinators encouraged to attend and present their projects & volunteer opportunities.

Linn County



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>

No events listed this month.



Seed Savers Exchange

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

No events listed this month.



Trees Forever

<https://treesforever.org/events>

No events listed this month.



MG Birthdays

November 2023

Amanda Baker
 Janis Bultman
 Melissa Close
 Anita Jung
 Julie Koeppel
 Catherine Kovach
 Linda Schreiber
 Nancy Weber



**Remember to
turn your clocks
back!**

Daylight Saving Time ends
Sunday, November 5.

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:

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Send email to: bielicke@iastate.edu