



Johnson County Master Gardener

THYMES

March 2021

MG Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday, Mar. 10, 7 P.M.; virtual Zoom meeting will continue for the near 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 or Doug Geraets at: dougrph@aol.com.

Please send news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc., for the April issue by **Friday, March 26**.

No Plant Sale & Flea Market this Spring

From Emil Rinderspacher, Chair, Plant Sale & Flea Market Committee:

There won't be a Plant Sale & Flea Market this spring... it's just not safe. The Plant Sale planning committee will meet virtually in March to begin planning for spring 2022.

2021 Seed Share

Spring is coming and we're excited to offer 2021 Seed Share—our 5th anniversary! Although the coronavirus pandemic curtailed the in-person exchange last year, we were able to fill requests for seeds. Again this year, out of a concern for the



health and safety of our volunteers, we will ask gardeners to request seeds by email.

The goal of the Seed Share program is to inspire gardening by offering a risk-free opportunity and to encourage gardeners to Plant-A-Row and donate excess produce to an area food pantry. Our local co-sponsors are CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank, Coralville Community Food Pantry, North Liberty Community Pantry and Johnson County Conservation.

Last year, there was a big rush for seeds so there was no way to estimate how many seeds would be donated. Though we have fewer Seed Share partners this year, just about the same number of seeds packets were donated—approximately 1,700—including seeds to start for transplanting herbs and vegetables. We also have local harvested flower seeds to share with gardeners who request them.

If you're interested in requesting seeds, please send an email to JohnsonCoMG@gmail.com using the subject line: 2021 Seed Share. An inventory will be sent to you and you will be able to choose up to 10 seed packets for personal use. If you are requesting seeds for a JCMG project, please specify in your request.

—Linda Schreiber

Project GREEN Garden Forum ...features local gardening author

Project GREEN Garden Forum on **Sunday, March 14, 2021, 2 p.m.**, will feature local author Beth Cody. Her 2020 book, *Iowa Gardens of the Past*, highlights lost and historic gardens of Iowa from 1850 to 1980. Ms. Cody will present the history of ornamental gardening in Iowa, illustrated



with slides of vintage gardens and colorful seed catalogs. Ms. Cody discovered Iowa had many beautiful gardens, both private and public,

that were conspicuously absent from landscape-history books. Fortunately, the gardens were preserved in photos and illustrations. With her presentation and in her book, she rescues Iowa's gardening history from obscurity. The book is available at www.iowagardens.com. It's a delightful read and may spark great memories of your grandma's garden.

Born and raised in Ames, Beth has lived in the Johnson County area for more than 25 years. She and her family (and 700 garden books) live in a 95-year-old farmhouse on their five acres in Amish country. She is a business owner and an avid amateur gardener who is either working in her garden, thinking about her garden, or reading garden books. Beth writes a garden blog at gardenfancy.blogspot.com

'Preparing For Possible Drought Conditions' Topic of Next JCMG CE Series

Johnson County Master Gardeners will offer a virtual continuing education program on **Sunday, March 28, from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.** with

Linn County Master Gardener Deb Walser presenting *How to Prepare for Possible Drought Conditions*. Ms. Walser will help gardeners prepare for one of the worst things that can happen to a garden—drought.



She will offer gardeners advice how to deal with another hot, hot summer like the summer of 2012! This talk will focus on how, what and when to water during a drought. Drought-tolerant plants will be the focus of this talk.

There is no cost to attend JCMG continuing education programs. The sessions are open to the public. JCMGs and those from surrounding counties

are invited to participate. Interested JCMG can register for the program by contacting Shannon Bielicke by email at bielicke@iastate.edu or by phone at 337-2145.

Registered participants will be able to ask presenters questions using the Chat feature in Zoom during the presentation. City Channel 4 will live-stream the presentation and videotape for rebroadcast. The series will also be hosted on the JCMG Facebook page and videotaped for replay on JCMG YouTube. Check CC4 for rebroadcast times.

Growing Tomatoes Inside the House—Part 2

BY LINDA DIGGELMANN

The four tasty cherry tomato plants I started from cuttings in November 2020 are thriving in our dining area under fluorescent lighting in addition to



ambient light. The 3-foot plants are supported by the grids in the shelves as well as string that reaches up from the pot to the higher shelf rungs. Since the plants are in 4-inch pots, they need to be

watered twice a day with very dilute fertilizer. The 4-inch pots were the largest pots I had when I started this experiment. I will get bigger pots if I try this again.

Unfortunately, the main stem of one of the tomato plants broke half-way apart as I “gently” wrapped it around the string support. That was disappointing! So, I used a toothpick and some tape to make a “splint” to hold the stem together. Remarkably, this stem now has a bump where it grew back together. The stem and leaves above the break are flourishing.

White flies are still a problem. Periodically, the tomato plants are sprayed with an organic insecticide to control them.

Many blooms started to appear on the plants in mid-January. Tomatoes are self-pollinating having

both male and female parts. In nature, the wind and pollinators will aid in dispersing the pollen to the stigma (female) of the flower. When the plants are inside, there are several methods you can use to mimic the wind and pollinators.

1. **Use an art brush:** A small brush is useful to gather the pollen inside each bloom from the anthers (male) of the flower. Next, the brush is moved over the stigma to deliver the pollen. Do this process to each flower.
2. **Battery-operated toothbrush:** Place the bristles at the back of the open flowers. Turn the toothbrush on for only a few seconds to give the flower a little shake. Move on to the next blossom.
3. **Cotton swab:** Use a cotton swab in much the same way you use the art brush. You can also collect the pollen by tapping the bloom over a small cup. Then use the swab to transfer the pollen to the stigma of each flower.
4. **Shake the plant:** You can gently shake the plants to initiate transfer of the pollen to the stigma. A similar method is flicking the plant with your finger.

These methods are repeated every 2 to 3 days to insure all the flowers get pollinated. I choose to use the “flicking the plant with your finger” method since I am not patient enough to manually pollinate every bloom.

Today (Feb. 25) there are several green tomatoes, about the size of large grapes, on the plants. My pollination technique is not as effective as wind and pollinators as my yield is not as robust as the yield last summer and fall.



Next month I hope to share photos of ripe, delicious, red tomatoes!

Avoiding Legionnaires' Disease



BY JAYNE RYDER

I never paid much attention when my mother warned me about Legionnaires' disease—how it could give me a deadly pneumonia and how I could easily inhale it without even realizing it. Even though it's usually more dangerous for elderly sufferers, a child digging in her mother's raspberry patch was still at risk. That didn't stop me from playing in the damp soil. My mother saw disease everywhere.

In her defense, Legionnaires' disease IS everywhere. Or rather, *Legionella* bacteria—the genus of pathogens that caused Legionnaires' disease—are everywhere. *Legionella* live in freshwater, including lakes, creeks, manmade water systems, hot tubs, cooling towers, and even rain. That's how they get into our gardens' soil.

Not only was my mother right about the bacteria her descriptions of Legionnaires' and its symptoms were accurate—understated, even. A form of atypical pneumonia, Legionnaires' disease or Legionellosis causes flu-like symptoms, including cough, fever, aches, and nausea or vomiting. There is no vaccine, so cases are usually treated with antibiotics. The disease has a 10% fatality rate in otherwise healthy individuals who contract it. For those with underlying conditions—such as immune disorders or lung disease—the fatality climbs to 25%.

The good news is that this disease does not spread from person to person. Legionnaires' is transmitted by inhalation via microscopic bacteria in aerosolized water or soil. In other words, you breathe in a “mist” containing the bacteria. Symptoms can begin anywhere from two to 10 days later.

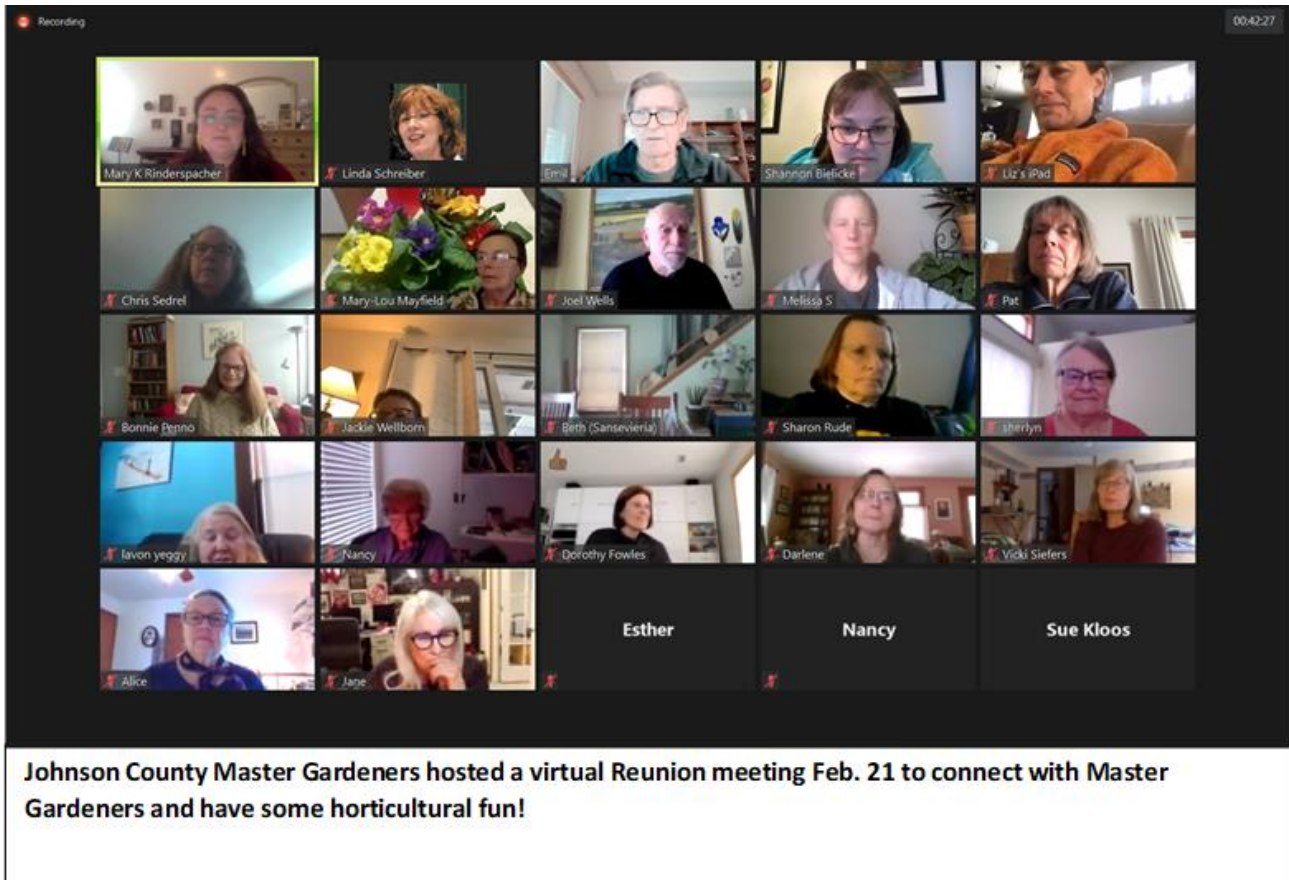
The best avoidance tactic is to stay away from poorly maintained water systems, such as fountains that are rarely drained. For hot tubs, pools, and spas, you can buy test strips from your local pool supply store. These strips work immediately to tell you if chemical levels in the water are sufficient to kill legionella bacteria.

As for the garden, there are steps you can take to keep yourself safe and still enjoy your favorite gardening activities:

- While *Legionella* bacteria live in freshwater, they can also survive in dry, dusty soil. If working with dry soil, use a small amount of clean water to dampen it. Use a hose to dampen freshly opened bags of soil before use.
- Pot plants and mix soils in a well-ventilated area, preferably outdoors.
- Wear a face mask and gloves, especially when performing rigorous tasks that may cause you to breathe deeper or more rapidly.
- Wash your hands thoroughly—you should have had lots of practice by now.
- Avoid working in soil immediately following rain or irrigation.
- If you have an irrigation system, look into periodic flushing or cleaning; buildup of *Legionella* bacteria increases risk of human infection.

[Editor’s comments: For me this article is a “blast from the past” as this information was coming out around the time of my Doctor of Pharmacy training years ago! Legionnaire’s gained its name in 1976 when an outbreak of pneumonia occurred among ~2,000 attendees at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia. Of 182 reported cases (mostly men) there were 29 deaths. In 1977, the causative agent was identified as a previously unknown strain of bacteria, subsequently named *Legionella* and the species that caused the outbreak named *Legionella pneumophila*.]

 MG Birthdays 	
March 2021	
4	Reed Rennecker
7	Tracy Edens
8	Mahmooda Ahmad
14	Mardi Rasmussen
15	Carl Hensley
19	Angela Murphy
19	Dan Stence
20	Laurie Canady
22	Joanne Grey
23	Barb Schintler
23	Beth Gehring
24	Torrie Masko
26	Chris Parizek



MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

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

March 2021

Bur Oak Land Trust

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

Wednesday, Mar. 10, 6 to 7 P.M.

Animal Tracking with Bur Oak Land Trust. Online through ICPL. Join Bur Oak Land Trust's Conservation Education Specialist, Darcey Gans, as she teaches us how to safely identify and distinguish various wildlife tracks and signs. Learn how you can recognize the presence of wildlife through tracks, trails, scat, urine, nests, food scraps, and more. Find out how your observations can not just bring you closer to your local land, but how you can help contribute to conservation as a community scientist. Registration required; space is limited. Register at <https://www.icpl.org/events/35896/animal-tracking-bur-oak-land-trust>.

Eastern Iowa Bird Watchers/IC Birds

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

Thursday, Mar. 18, 6:45 to 9 P.M.

Bird Club Meeting. Zoom. Take a deep dive into habitat management at our hottest hotspot! Steven Woodruff, Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist for the Iowa River Wildlife Unit, presents “Management Practices of the Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area”. Steven will discuss a variety of management practices conducted by the Hawkeye Wildlife Unit staff. Management practices range from water level manipulation, tree encroachment removal on sand dunes and uplands grasslands, willow reduction, food plots, artificial nest structures, etc. In addition, Steve will include water level determinations in accordance with the USCOE Coralville Water Level Management Plan. Login details sent via email to ICBC club members.

Linn County-ISU Extension

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

Saturdays in March.

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

- **Mar. 6:**
 - 9 to 10 A.M. Beginners Guide to Vegetable Gardening
 - 10 to 11 A.M. Organic Vegetable Gardening
 - 11 A.M. to 12 P.M. Herbs for the Butterflies
- **Mar. 13:**
 - 9 to 10 A.M. Discover Butterflies
 - 10 to 11 A.M. Spring Gardening Maintenance
 - 11 A.M. to 12 P.M. Perennials in 2021
- **Mar. 27:**
 - 9 to 10 A.M. Tropicals in Iowa Gardens
 - 10 to 11 A.M. Natives
 - 11 A.M. to 12 P.M. For the Love of Monarchs

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

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

Project GREEN

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

Sunday, Mar. 14, 2 to 4 P.M.

Second Sunday Garden Forum: Iowa Gardens of the Past. Online through ICPL. Iowa City gardener and author Beth Cody will give a presentation of the history of ornamental gardening in Iowa, illustrated by a slideshow of beautiful vintage gardens and colorful seed catalogues from her new book, “Iowa Gardens of the Past.” Register at <https://www.icpl.org/events/35573/second-sunday-garden-forum-iowa-gardens-past-beth-cody>.

Trees Forever

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

Tuesdays, Mar. 16, 23, and 30, 6 to 8 P.M.

TreeKeepers. Virtual event. The Trees Forever *TreeKeepers* program is designed for people who want to become more knowledgeable about urban tree planting and care and who wish to become a stronger voice for trees in their neighborhoods and communities. Participants in *TreeKeepers* will take part in hands-on and classroom presentations led by experienced Trees Forever staff members and other invited tree experts. All training will incorporate opportunities for practicing skills learned. After completion of the *TreeKeepers* program, participants will be equipped with the knowledge of how to maintain our urban trees and plant trees for future generations. Trained *TreeKeepers* volunteers will be additional “eyes and ears” for trees in their neighborhoods and can share their knowledge with neighbors and key influencers. Cost: \$15. Register at <http://www.treesforever.org/Treekeepers>.

Wednesday, Mar. 17, 6 to 8 P.M.

Windbreaks 101: What it is and why you need one. Virtual event. Join Trees Forever's Brad Riphagen to learn about planning a windbreak, species to plant, wildlife benefits. Guest presenters will include staff from the DNR, NRCS, and Cass County Conservation. Open Q&A period to follow. Register at <http://www.treesforever.org/WindbreakWebinar>.

Additional Resources/Event Opportunities

100 Grannies

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

Backyard Abundance

<http://backyardabundance.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/>

Johnson County-ISU Extension

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

New Pioneer Coop

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

Seed Savers

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



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Mail can be sent to:

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