



Johnson County Master Gardener

THYMES

May 2020

MG Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 7 P.M.; Johnson County Extension Office or virtual TBD. Interested MGs are invited to participate—contact Shannon!

Thymes Deadline

Information/articles for the *THYMES* should be sent to Doug Geraets at dougrph@aol.com or Melissa Serenda at msserenda@gmail.com.

Please send news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc., for the June issue by **Friday, May 29**.

ATTENTION: Due the pandemic and the importance of social distancing, our annual Plant Sale & Flea Market has been cancelled! ☹

FREE... Yes That Says FREE Tomato And Pepper Seedlings

Our own Janice Hining has FREE tomato and pepper seedlings!



***These are *not* Janice's actual plants

These were started for the JCMG Plant Sale and since there will be no Plant Sale she doesn't

want to plant all of them. There aren't that many, and, she can deliver them to the Extension office for pick up. Call Janice at 319-321-0081 to find out what varieties, how many and to schedule pick up.

Return To The Park

BY MELANIE HAUPERT

Last week Bonnie Penno, Maggie Elliott, Barb Robinson, Pat Quiles, and I met at the Iowa City Hospice site along the bike trail in Willow Creek Park. We gathered, clippers and diggers in hand, to weed and clip—at a distance from one another—but within ear-shot.

Six months have gone by since we have gathered like this, and the chance to see our gardening friends, the daffodils we have planted over the years, and the familiar passers-by lifted our spirits. The soil there is loose and crumbly after years accumulating leaves from surrounding woods. It is the perfect antidote for weeks of distancing and sheltering in place.



From left: Melanie Hauptert, Barb Robinson, Pat Quiles, and Maggie Elliott (picture by Bonnie Penno)

“Thanks for your work!” the passing walkers often shout. Stella Clark, Janice Hining, Chris Sedrel, Barb Schintler and Joyce Miller also work to keep our site at Willow Creek Park tidy. We can’t help but feel appreciated, but MGs who work here also benefit from this special place.

Landscaping On The Edge

BY MARY LOU MAYFIELD

One of the “winter workshops” offered in February at IC Landscaping and Gardening Center was presented by Joshua Gustafson, Landscape Designer. He introduced us to the basics of bed shape edging techniques, materials for defining the plant bed, and perennial plants to enhance the bed edge.

Know what plants you want to put in the bed and the growth habit of each plant so they have plenty of room. Examples of the type of feature plants you might want to put in include hydrangea, boxwood, and astilbe, and he showed how to plan around each kind.

Beds are most attractive if they have flowing, rather than straight or tight wavy lines. If there is a structure like a chain link fence cutting through the bed, be consistent with the edging so the design flows through the structure. Also echo existing plant shapes, so the border provides centering, spacing, and balance.

EDGING

There are many types of edging.

1. Turf to mulch, or “spaded edge” is natural looking and requires maintenance of a clean edge. It’s best to leave room for the wheel of the lawn mower between the plants and the grass.
2. Metal edging tends to pop up from frost heaving, and won’t stay in place if going downhill
3. Vinyl gets brittle and provides an artificial plastic contrast to the natural materials.
4. Interlocking “bullet” edges are easy to install and stay in place. They fit around curves better than rectangular bricks, and you can

choose from different colors. For a finished corner, the curve can be cut off with a chisel or power cutter.

5. “Holland Stone” 4 inch by 8 inch can provide a more formal look. They are not heavy and don’t set deep into the ground. They can be put on gravel to prevent frost heaving, and you can fill in the joints with sand. They come in a variety of natural colors.
6. “Belgian Blocks” are made of concrete and can be set low enough to mow over.
7. “Anamosa Limestone” can be chiseled to shape and leave room for the mower wheel so you don’t need a string trimmer. A row of 4 inch by 4 inch blocks help hold the mulch in place. Limestone may crumble in time.
8. “Flagstone” is flat, and more natural looking. Line it up on the lawn side. May crack in time.
9. “Cobblestones” around a raised bed are harder to maintain, needs a string trimmer, or a “no mow” lawn like sand or gravel.



Before



After

INSTALLATION

Contact “Iowa One Call,” to locate utility lines, even if you are only digging down a few inches!

Equipment:

- Flat spade
- Garden hose or white marking paint to lay out the edges of a curved bed
- String line & stakes for straight lines.
- Rubber mallet or dead blow hammer to set edging in
- Chisel & hammer or power cutter for trimming blocks

Procedure:

1. Lay out with garden hose or straight lines
2. Trace with white spray paint
3. Wait for Iowa One Call to mark the utility lines
4. Strip sod and layer bed with newspaper
5. Dig trench 4-6 inches wide and deeper than edging
6. Put loose sand or soil in bottom
7. Set edges and level with mallet
8. Front fill with loose soil or sand and back fill to bed. Leave 1-2" deep to catch mulch
9. Set so top edges are level with lawn for easier mowing
10. Leave room on the front for drainage, so mulch won't wash away; don't use edging as a "retaining wall."

Cleaning—power wash, "set and forget," or use algicide.

PLANTS

When planning a flower bed, there are certain plants that show off best in different parts of the bed. For instance, Boxwood, Spirea Japonica (pink) and St. John's Word shrubs look best toward the back. Tall catmint, or Salvia species, look better in the middle. For the front of the garden, you want some low-growing plants that allow you to enjoy the taller varieties in the middle and back. Here are a few:

- Dianthus Cheddar Pink (*gratianopolitanus*) – clumps and makes attractive pockets
- Threadleaf Coreopsis (*verticillata*) can be a problem when the leaves blacken at the end of the season
- "Autumn Joy" Sedum – more upright than other sedums, blooms late in the season
- Black-eyed Susan Rudbeckia (*fulgida*) "Goldsturm"
- Dwarf Daylilies, including "Stella d'Oro," and "Happy Returns"
- Grasses, like:
- Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) dwarf varieties; leave room for leaves and flower spikes to bend over

- Purple Love Grass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)

For shady areas:

- Hosta dwarf varieties – "Halcyon" has bluish leaves
- Coralbells (*Heuchera*)
- Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*)
- Lungwort (*Pulmonaria*)
- Cranesbill Geranium
- Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa*) has lime-green leaves

Best to avoid:

- Bed used as a retaining wall unless needed as a raised bed
- Using garden wall blocks for borders
- White rocks or recycled tires

Resources:

<https://www.finegardening.com/article/perfect-edges-for-your-beds-and-borders>

<https://www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/gardening/a27155910/how-to-make-stone-border-for-flower-bed-garden/>

The Importance Of Gardening

COMPILED BY SHANNON BIELICKE

As we are home and keeping our bodies and minds busy it is a good time to reflect on the impact that gardening has on us. Gardening is a part of everyone's life in many underappreciated ways. You share a love of gardening with your fellow Johnson County Master Gardeners and though we may all garden for different reasons, we appreciate the role that it plays every day.

This question was posed to our JCMG. "What makes gardening an important part of your

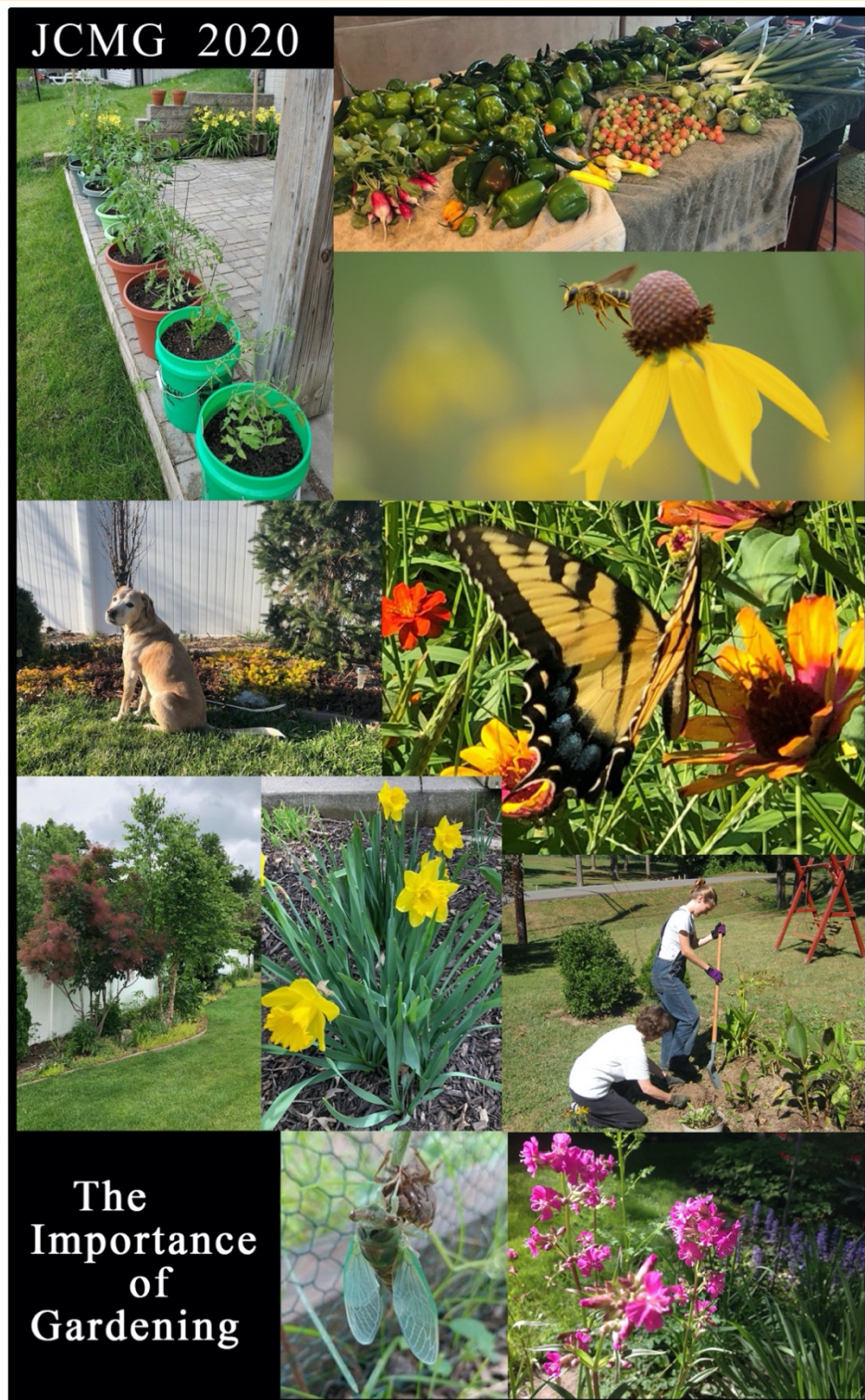
life?” The following is a compilation of those who responded:

- 🌱 It brings me and others joy appreciating nature, beauty, simplicity, and nature.
- 🌱 Simply put, I enjoy it. I enjoy planting seeds and watching them emerge, along with perennial flowers, trees and shrubs after a winter nap. I enjoy feeling the sun on my back, the wind in my hair, and the different textures of leaves. I enjoy smelling the flowers and the earth after a rain. I enjoy watching the birds and the bees and the butterflies, and the cat between my feet. I enjoy listening to the twittering of birds, the buzzing of bees, and the croaking of frogs. I enjoy tasting sun warmed tomatoes and cool, crisp cucumbers. But, more important, it reminds me of the wisest, bravest woman I know - my mother. She taught us the reward of hard work and gardening IS hard work. She taught me to garden, to grow and preserve the harvest. I want to enjoy gardening as long as my body will allow.
- 🌱 For me, gardening has both physical and mental benefits. It keeps me physically strong and flexible, stretching and bending. It is also a good dose of fresh air after working in an office all day. Mentally, it takes my mind off other stresses of work and life - it's a mental break. It fascinates me to see new growth and how much plants grow on a daily basis. It is also a creative and artistic expression, creating groupings of various plants together. For me, it is a lifelong hobby with many health benefits.
- 🌱 The time learning with like-minded gardeners really reinforced why I love gardening and try hard to work it into my life. I love and am awed by the complexity of nature and I love learning about and discovering everything I can. I like the experimental piece too—you don't have to be afraid to try new things in your own garden! Gardening is also amazing exercise, and a good time for reflection and quiet as well—as someone

with anxiety I know it is good for my mental health.

- 🌱 Gardening is important to me because: I can transport myself into my own world—until I need some plants—then, I need advice from others; just like myself!! A chance to relate to others, who have the same relationship to the soil in my hands and the sunshine on my face.
- 🌱 Gardening is deeply important to me for so many reasons. I first started experimenting with growing my own food in containers as a college student. Becoming self-sufficient seemed like a smart thing to start learning. After we bought our first home, we inherited a large unmanaged vegetable garden from the previous owners. The weeds were thick, but the soil was rich. I learned so much from that vegetable garden- dealing with rabbits, deer, and raccoons. How to harvest food, what seedlings look like... and since my husband was raised by a single mother/gardener he also wanted all the flowers and trees, so, I learned about that as well.
- 🌱 The garden is a constant learning experience. I'm a citizen scientist doing experiments, forming hypotheses, and observing the natural world. I've learned nature does things better than me, so I opt for the easier solutions. Leave the leaves, let the Japanese beetles eat what they want, and sow seeds directly into the soil.
- 🌱 Right now, we feel blessed to have put all the sweat equity into our yard. We call it our own private botanical center. In the time of physical distancing, we have a private place full of flowers and trees that bring us exponential joy. Neighbors walk by and tell us about their experiences with the parts of the garden near the sidewalk. We grow our vegetables in the front yard, partially for easy access and also to encourage others to grow their own food. Vegetable gardens don't have to be an unruly mess.
- 🌱 My garden has become my main creative outlet. My garden is where I find peace, joy,

and wholeness. I never realized how important gardening would be to me, but now I can't imagine my life without a garden.



- 🌱 People enjoy gardening because of the friendships you gain and knowing what you have accomplished others enjoy. It's the continuation of the inside of your house or other area to the outside.
- 🌱 For me, gardening is a way to experience and try to reach an understanding with living things whose way of being is so very different from my own. You have to get to know a plant to keep it happy: what type of soil it needs, how much light, what nutrition. And their life stories! The houseplant descended from plants that lived on the floor of the Amazon rainforest. The coneflower whose ancestors were trod by bison on the prairie. The rose that was meticulously bred and preserved through generations. And the way their life stories intertwine with our own, like the lily of the valley whose sight and scent reminds me of my Granny's side yard, or the Dragon's Blood sedum that my mom allowed me to select and plant in a corner of our backyard as a child. Everything we do, everything we have ever done as a species, is inextricably bound to the plants that nourished us, sheltered us, clothed us, entertained us. Their history and lives are a reflection of our own, and I love being a part of it.
- 🌱 Gardening is important to me because taking good care of the earth is therapeutic.
- 🌱 My mother instilled in me the love of gardening, and I carry her spirit whenever I am in a garden.
- 🌱 The joy of taking care of living things and watching them thrive, enjoying their beauty and deliciousness!
- 🌱 Gardening is creating beauty and inspiration for others; and in so doing, gardening helps everyone, especially our children and grandchildren, to have a deeper appreciation, understanding, love for and engagement with nature.
- 🌱 For me gardening is an important part of my life because it is all wrapped up in one an excuse to clear my mind, knowledge and

skill to teach and learn from others, a topic to talk to almost anyone about. It is something that allows me to be proud of what I know and challenges me to find out what I don't know. It also is something that allows me to trial with error and still be excited of what grows in the end. I garden for the strength it gives me, my family, and my community.

 MG Birthdays 	
May 2019	
2	Lori Penn-Goetsch
8	Joyce Miller
9	Sharon Jeter
11	Sandy Gannon
15	Marilyn Kempnich
16	Breyan Neyland
22	Weijing Wu
25	Mary Lou Mayfield
29	Bonnie Penno
31	Kathy Donnelly

MG Upcoming Events/Volunteer Opportunities

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

May 2020

Backyard Abundance

<http://backyardabundance.org/events>

Fridays, May 1 and May 15

10:30 to 11:30 A.M. Garden Guru at the Edible Classroom. Facebook Live Video. Enjoy your lunch with a virtual visit to the Edible Classroom.

- May 1: Veggie Planting Party
- May 15: Wellness in the Garden

Visit the Edible Classroom at Robert A Lee Community Center after each event to see what was done, pick up free publications, tend the garden and harvest food. Please make sure to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines. Link to event details:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/316138866021331/>.

Saturday, May 2

1 to 2:30 P.M. Establish a Pollinator Garden. Facebook Live Chat. Learn to support your buzzing friends from the safety of your home. Tune in for a Facebook Live chat with Fred Meyer of Backyard Abundance. (See complete description under Bur Oak Land Trust entry.) Event link:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/463043337733518/>.

Sundays, May 3 and May 17

3 to 4 P.M. Garden Guru at Wetherby Park Edible Forest. Facebook Live Video. Join us (virtually) at this mature edible forest for the following sessions:

- May 3: Wake Up, Garden. Wake up, Tools
- May 17: Sow Resilience; Veggie and Herb Planting

Visit the Wetherby Park Edible Forest after each event to see what was done, pick up free publications, tend the garden and harvest food. Please follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines to keep yourself and your community safe. Event link:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/279428103057345/>.

Sunday, May 3 and Monday, May 4

Various times. Echocollective Farm Socially Distanced Plant Sales. Due the pandemic and the importance of social distancing, our annual Edible Plant Sale Fundraiser has been cancelled. We still want local growers to thrive, so Backyard Abundance is helping them sell plants safely from the yards of their residential homes. Gardeners will get the plants they need. Growers will be compensated for their amazing work. We will do this safely and mindfully. Our community will benefit by growing hope and a more resilient food system. Visit the event pages for more details and how to sign up for a time slot:

Sunday, May 3: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2979745125585125/>

Monday, May 4: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1578472458982729/>

Wednesdays, May 13 and 27

4:30 to 5:30 P.M. Garden Guru at Creekside Park Edible Forest. Facebook Live Video. Learn about Iowa City's newest edible forest in a virtual format.

- May 13: Planting Edibles, Groundcover, and a Living Mulch
- May 27: Inter-planting Veggies

Visit Creekside Park Edible Forest after each event to see what was done, pick-up free publications, tend the garden and harvest food. Please follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Link to event details: <https://www.facebook.com/events/963068437475809>.

Bur Oak Land Trust

www.buroaklandtrust.org/events/

Saturday, May 2

1 to 2:30 P.M. Establish a Pollinator Garden. Facebook Live Chat. Learn to support your buzzing friends from the safety of your home. Tune in for a Facebook Live chat with Fred Meyer of Backyard Abundance. You will learn:

- How to create an ever-blooming garden that attracts pollinators, monarchs and birds.
- How to properly establish prairie plants
- The pros and cons of planting seeds versus plants

Phil Ricks from Beautiful Land Products will join us with a solid overview of pollinator-garden design considerations. Lidija Stojanovic of Bur Oak Land Trust will teach you about a family friendly activity. Keep your cooped up kids engaged while they learn about pollinators. Permaculturalist Roxane Mitten will show you how to make trellises and garden gates out of the flexible shoots of sustainable and affordable willow. Unleash your creativity with original designs inspired by her work. And just for fun... Lucy Marsh will play some tunes on her fiddle. Event link:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/463043337733518/>

New Pioneer Coop

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

Wednesday, May 13

5:30 to 7 P.M. Co-op to Co-op Ride. Save the date for a FREE family-friendly bike ride Wednesday May 13 from New Pi Iowa City to New Pi Coralville.

Project GREEN

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

Wanted: Your Garden. Open Gardens weekend will be June 27-28, 2020. Sharing your garden can make a difference and inspire other gardeners. Consider sharing your garden.

<http://www.projectgreen.org>.

Trees Forever

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

Wednesday, May 6

10 A.M. Webinar: Getting Your Kids Outdoors with YOU. Hear from two experienced folks on how to engage your kids outdoors. Many parents feel awkward and unsure about what they should allow their kids to do outdoors and what activities they can help them with. Hear from Dave Blankenship,

Trees Forever Board Chair, Wilderness EMT and national Boy Scout leader, and Kevin Bennett, Trees Forever Program Manager and father of five. Be inspired by these dedicated Trees Forever folks! Register at <http://www.treesforever.org/Webinar5-6-20>.

Additional Resources/Event Opportunities

100 Grannies

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

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>

salgreen@co.johnson.ia.us

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

Johnson County-ISU Extension

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

Linn County-ISU Extension

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

Seed Savers

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



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Mail can be sent to:

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