

**JOHNSON COUNTY IOWA MASTER GARDENERS**  
**Johnson County Master Gardener Project Leader Annual Report**



Name of Project: **Ecumenical Tower Gardens**

Name(s) of Project Leader(s):

- John Weeg
- Michael Hesseltine

Provide a brief statement of the involvement/impact for the project:

This project has had a significant amount of volunteer activity this growing season. The site hosted at least three major projects including a refresh of an existing large perennial bed, a new hügelkultur bed creation and finally an end of season raised container bed build. The impact of the project consisted of education to residents living in the building and passersby on Washington street. The first two large projects drew more than a dozen volunteers each. New this year was a stronger partnership with Linda Schreiber, the organizer of the other downtown Master Gardener garden sites. John and I hope to continue and strengthen this partnership over the coming year.

Number and names of Master Gardeners Involved:

John Weeg	Susan Miller	Byron Vandenberg	Janlyn Slach	Chris Sedrel
Michael Hesseltine	Caroline Parris	Laura Bonifazi	Leah Latella	Sara Hoff
Mary Mascher	Angie Dains	Natalie Schreffler	Patrick Rossman	Teri Berg
Nancy Weber	Linda Schreiber	Julie Crocket	Darlene Clausen	Sadia Embree
Emily Thomas	Jeff Walberg	M. Brentwood	Fred Meyer	Melia Pieper

Please include a description of project impact:

The project brought together community education and engagement for those who reside at the Ecumenical Tower apartments and for those in the community who attended various events such as the Hügelkultur dig. The garden impact is several fold. First to improve street scape and building appeal for those living in the build as well as those passing by. Second, to educate the public and building residents on different garden techniques. Third, to provide micro-habitat in an otherwise urban center for flora and fauna native to the Midwest.

Provide a summary of project activities conducted throughout the calendar year and the results of the project (include data of the success(es) of the project and or partner(s)).

1. Conducted a spring refresh of an existing large perennial bed central to the site
2. Established a new hügelkultur bed on central lawn
3. Designed and built a raised 16 feet long by 3 feet wide by 32-inch-high container bed

Statement of what you consider the greatest success of this project:

This project works in concert with other projects and project leaders but new this year was our association with the Downtown City Gardens' Master Gardener projects. These projects bring natural elements to the urban landscape while providing habitat for insects, including butterflies, birds and other small mammals that are native to the Midwest in an otherwise less hospitable urban landscape. These urban oases add to the walkability of the streetscapes and raise the quality of life for local

citizens. The project coordinator and volunteers were instrumental in bringing their assistance and expertise to the Ecumenical Towers garden project site.

What are the needs to help this project continue?

Continued support from the ET staff and management team is critical including their partnership with the JCMGs. Their annual financial support has been a welcome resource for the project to draw from. Continued support from MG volunteers is necessary to continue to revitalize the gardens and keep the residents of the building engaged.

What changes would you consider making for the future?

Continue to expand and refine the gardens to help move them towards a more sustainable level of maintenance. This will allow for more innovation and education to take place. Continue partnering with the ET staff and management team to work on expanding on the existing garden footprint to add additional interest for residents and passersby alike while keeping the before mentioned sustainability goal in mind. Part of this plan will be selecting plants that are drought tolerant yet offer diversity of color and texture in the landscape.

John Weeg:

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**Project Co-Leader**

Michael Hesseltine:

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**Project Co-Leader**

December 2023

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**Date**