

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



Name of Project: HortLine

Name(s) of Project Leader(s): Mary Starry

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

We have a small but very active group of volunteers who put a lot of work into researching and answering both email and phone questions from people in the community. In 2023, we had the following statistics:

Initial Request was via

Phone Call (55)

In Person (3)

Emails (89)

Total Requests = 147

Type of Question

Trees & Shrubs (35)

Flowers (23)

Vegetables and Small Fruits (23)

Weeds/Pests (22)

Houseplants (2)

Lawn (18)

Other (26)

Total Questions = 149

Two topics under “Other” came up multiple times, one topic involved questions regarding raising plants from seeds, and the other topic was about starting native habitats and native grasses. We may want to consider adding those two topics to our Type of Question list.

Number and names of Master Gardeners Involved:

We currently have 25 volunteers who have requested to receive the monthly sign-ups for HortLine. The following people have worked for one or more HortLine volunteer sessions:

Janis Bultman (9 days)

Melissa Close (1 day)

Linda Diggelman (8 days)

Carl Hensley (6 days)

Mary Hensley (6 days)

Pat Kealy (6 days)

Bonnie Penno (5 days)
Salome Phillmann (1 day)
Esther Retish (5 days)
Linda Schreiber (8 days)
Chris Smith (9 days)
Mary Starry (9 days)
Jeff Walberg (12 days)
Jackie Wellborn (13 days)

Total Days Worked By Volunteers: 98

Please include a description of project impact:

We had a total of 149 questions from 147 different requests from the community, so the community definitely views us as a valuable resource for information.

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)).

Please see statistics above. We are a weekly on-going project throughout the year.

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

We are continuing to work very hard on making sure all answers are research based, using our university resources and other .edu resources, versus gardeners' personal experience or what they've heard. We stress that in all our training sessions for new volunteers.

We have had several younger, very enthusiastic people join us this past year! As long as the project leader gets the sign-ups out in a timely fashion, there is no issue with having people volunteer to come in and work. If anything, we've had complaints about how hard it is to find a date to sign up, especially if you don't respond to the sign-up email immediately.

What are the needs to help this project continue? What changes would you consider making for the future?

I would like to add two new topics to our Information Requested list: 1) Seeds and 2) Native Habitat

I would like to purchase some additional books for our library, published within the past year. There are many new books on native habitats and that is a topic we are getting questions about.

Then we need more advertising within the Johnson County area so more people are aware of us and we have more requests for information so we can more effectively use all of our volunteers.

Social media in Johnson County has several very active plant and gardening groups, which are full of questions being posted. It would be nice to have those questions coming to us for researched answers instead of the array of answers posted by well-meaning but often uneducated persons. I don't know what would be involved or what approval we would need, but starting our own "HortLine Answers" social media page where we provide our research-based answers to questions should be considered. We could start by posting questions and answers we researched that week, and then encourage people to post their own questions, which our volunteers could then research and answer.

Mary J Starry

Project Leader

12/12/2023

Date