

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



**Name of Project:**

*Thymes* Newsletter

**Name(s) of Project Leader(s):**

Melissa Serenda & Doug Geraets

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

The *Thymes* newsletter serves as a primary conduit to share information with MGs about JCMG business, project updates and information, events of interest, and for MGs to share their knowledge and expertise via articles on topics of interest.

The JCMG-Thymes blog allows JCMGs to share educational articles with the public via social media and through internet searches, to expand the newsletter's impact.

**Number and names of Master Gardeners Involved:**

Around 25 MGs contributed as editors or submitted some form of article to the newsletter: Melissa Serenda, Doug Geraets, Linda Schreiber (article superstar), Teri Berg, Darlene Clausen, Kathy Erenberger, Melanie Haupt, Mary Hensley, Michael Hesseltine, Sharon Jeter, Marilyn Kempnich, Alice Linhart, Karen Martinek, Kay Mohling, Carolyn & Mike Murphy, Bonnie Penno, Emil Rinderspacher, Sharon Rude, Chris Sedrel, Mary Starry, John Weeg, Jackie Wellborn, Joel Wells, and Lavon Yeggy.

**Please include a description of project impact:**

The information in the *Thymes* potentially impacted every JCMG, ~130 individuals.

The jcmg-thymes blog had 3,387 views by 1,555 visitors in 2023 with 26 posts published—which means we potentially reached more than 10x the number of people than via the PDF newsletter alone!

(For comparison, in 2022 the jcmg-thymes blog had 2,803 views by 1,154 visitors with 38 posts published.)

**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)).**

Our goals for 2023 were

1. To increase the number of JCMG submitters over 2022 (we held steady at ~25 contributors)
2. To increase the reach of articles on the jcmg-thymes blog month over month from 2022 (we dramatically increased the overall reach over 2022—20% higher views and 35% more visitors).
3. To continue producing a high-quality newsletter on schedule. (Done and done! Ten issues produced on time.)

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

The Thymes has consistently produced a quality newsletter, thanks to the detail-oriented editing by Linda and Doug (and excited to introduce new volunteer proofreader Teri Berg). The transition to a new design was completed and standardized using InDesign, and a new feature "Meet a JCMG" was rolled out in the Dec. 2023/Jan. 2024 issue. We have an excellent corps of regular writers who ensure each issue has informative and impactful material of interest to JCMGs.

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

We need consistent submissions from JCMGs on a variety of topics. Regular project updates from coordinators are helpful and informative; because the *Thymes* newsletter reports and documents MG information, increased submissions from project coordinators may increase readership and provide historical documentation of JCMG activities through the years.

We are planning to train additional volunteers to help manage the jcmg-thymes blog.

To expand our volunteer base, we could potentially offer an incentive for people to submit articles, or solicit ideas for getting more people interested in contributing. We could also consider combining the Thymes with other "educational/outreach" projects like Hortline, Speakers Bureau, Yard & Garden Info under a single umbrella to leverage volunteer experience and knowledge that can be shared among these related projects.

\_\_\_\_Melissa Serenda\_\_\_\_\_  
**Project Leader**

\_\_\_\_12/17/23\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**