

Germinator



Vol. 32, No. 8 Editors: Julie Stark/Kathy Hughes

August 2021

LINN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER EVENTS

Steering Committee Meeting

Extension Office
August 10 • 6:30 pm

Note: All Steering Committee meetings are now occurring the 2nd Tuesday of each month

Executive Committee Meeting

Extension Office
August 16 • 3:00 pm

Extension Council Meeting

Extension Office
August 9 • 5:00 pm

Weed & Feed

Lowe Park
August 30 • 7:00-8:30 pm

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Germinator Deadline



All Linn County Master Gardeners are encouraged and welcome to submit news, volunteer opportunities, stories, pictures, gardening book reviews, etc. for the September Germinator issue by August 21, 2021.

Please send to: Julie Stark
(crgardengal@gmail.com) or
Kathy Hughes
(hughesydoozey@yahoo.com)

August

Coordinator Message:

I hope that everyone's gardens are now both productive and beautiful! The long wait is over and my veggies are finally ripening and my flowers are in full bloom. It's always such a thrill to be able to pick something that you grew yourself! I might get sick of tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers by the end of August but right now it's so fun to check the garden every day for more produce.

Community Partnerships: I'm reaching out to some of the amazing non-profits in our community about potential partnerships. I'll be talking with Matthew 25 and Prairiewoods in the next couple of weeks to see how we can work together because we often have very similar missions. After COVID, the increase in food insecurity is certainly on everyone's radar, including the Extension's. We can play a really important role in improving that situation. Every year we grow a tremendous amount of produce that gets donated to food pantries through our community gardens. We also have an equally important role in educating the public about how to be gardeners themselves in order to grow healthy fresh food. Many of you are wonderful teachers and love to pass on your experience and knowledge so we'll continue to look for opportunities for you to pass that on to others. I know that some of you are also making community connections as well so be sure to let me know if you think there's someone I should talk to.

KCRG News: We've had 3 segments on the KCRG midday news so far so I want to thank Larry Dawson, Kari Pohl, and Beula Dvorak who have volunteered to do the shows. If you have any interest in doing one about a gardening topic be sure to let me know!

Fall Interns: We have a huge class starting in late August. We're up to **42!** If you would like to help mentor one or several of the interns let me know and I'll get you connected. Everyone will be doing their classes online but we'll definitely get them included in some functions. Right now we have eight men and the rest are women.

Weed & Feeds: We'll continue to have our Weed & Feeds out at Lowe Park Demonstration Gardens in Marion the last Monday of the month through fall. It's such a great opportunity to help the fantastic crew who puts endless hours in out there to make those gardens look their best. Right now we have it from 7pm-8:30pm but may need to shift that when it starts to get darker earlier.

Two Big Events Next Year: We've started planning the Winter Gardening Fair and the Garden Walk. We have tentative dates on both of them and they'll be excellent opportunities for you to either attend or to help at. More details will be coming as plans are made.

Derecho Damage: I know that many of you are very busy in your yards this summer working on things that were damaged from the storm. Sometimes these priorities may prevent you from volunteering but hopefully this fall we'll get to see some of you who have wrapped up those projects.

My Contact Information: Please feel free to email me at sandyros@iastate.edu or call me at 377-9839 (ext. 316) for anything!

Until next month,
Sandy



Demonstration Gardens—Containers

By Beth Weeks

This is the second year I have been involved in the container planters at Lowe Park. This year Paul Wilson and Nicole Brighton are also involved with the containers. There are approximately 25 planters that are placed around our garden space at the park. Choosing the plants to use is dependent on what our greenhouse can provide, leftovers from the plant sale and what we are able to purchase from area greenhouses and retailers with a minimal budget. I've found that greenhouses in the Kalona area have a nice selection of healthy plants at reasonable prices.

The process begins with making sure the containers are clean before asking one of the greenhouse crew members to build the soil using their special recipe and fill the containers with that soil as well as a slow-release fertilizer. The work that they provide is extremely helpful. After those steps are completed the plants that have been gathered are distributed between the containers dependent on size and color.

There are surprises such as the 'Nicotiana' Flowering Tobacco Lime plants in a few of the containers this year. The greenhouse had several for me to use although I had never seen this plant before and had no information regarding the size of the plants at maturity. Often while planting the containers, we google the plant to get some information but had forgotten my phone the day that these were planted. I'm pleased to say that I love the plant and hope to use them again but perhaps not in the same way they were used this year.

This year my personal favorite container is in the butterfly garden. It's a shallow, round container hidden along an inside path and the colors and heights are very pleasing to me for some reason.

Paula, Nicole, and I share the maintenance responsibilities. Each of us has a designated day that we water and dead head the container plants as well as fill the three bird baths. On Sundays, the plants are fertilized with a liquid Miracle Grow product. We have been able to cover for each other if there is a reason we are unable to make our usual designated day and I know that is greatly appreciated.

Last year the derecho damage to the gardens at Lowe Park took a toll on a couple of the containers but a fellow master gardener that was moving out of the area donated a few beautiful containers that she was unable to take with her. We were also unable to take cuttings from the container plants because of the damage to the greenhouse. I'm hoping that at the end of this season we can take cuttings to use again next year as well as sell at the plant sale.

There is a lot of foot traffic through the gardens at Lowe Park. It's an enjoyable place to serve as a master gardener as people comment how beautiful the gardens are and share information about their gardens at home.



Xeric Garden

By Brenda Garbe

The other day while working in the Xeric Garden, I had another visitor ask the question about what does Xeric mean. Its not common terminology for us living in the Midwest. The dictionary defines Xeric as of an environment or habitat containing little moisture; very dry. "Xeric condition"

Characterized by a scanty supply of moisture (or tolerating or adapted to dry conditions).

When I adopted the Xeric Garden in 2018, I knew very little about the plantings or conditions that are included. I've slowly researched and learned what that means for an Iowa garden, for those wanting to implement low plant water requirements into their landscape and still be cold hardy.

Plants at the backbone of the Xeric Garden are False Blue Indigo, Ironweed, Goldenrod, Yucca, Penstemon, Purple Coneflower, Columbine, Salvia, and lots of Grasses. Controlling the natives so they don't take over the entire garden has currently been the biggest challenge. Continuing to add some diversity to the garden with unusual Coneflowers, Agastache, Blanket Flower, and Butterfly Weed is my current goal.

A vertical rock garden is at one end with lots of small-scale plants: succulents, thyme, brass buttons. Gravel had been integrated to improve the soil for the alpine type plants. The biggest challenge is keeping the ground covering succulents at bay so they don't cover the stones completely. I'm attempting to add hardy Ice Plants to the mixture, but no luck this season.



Care is limited to pruning or dividing, sometimes removing entire plants, mulching to control unwanted weeds. I do like to trim down the ironweed and Goldenrod early in summer just to keep the height down, so they don't overwhelm the surrounding plants. I also cut back the Salvia and Penstemon to push for a second bloom and keep the re-seeding to a minimum.

Watering is not required unless a new plant is introduced, and compost is used sparingly. The existing soil conditions are very favorable to most any plant growth, especially the natives. I only add slow-release fertilizer if I'm adding a new plant and water as needed until established.

In the fall I leave most all the plants standing thru the winter, so clean up is minimal. The grasses especially look lovely in the winter, the Indigo and Yucca are very structural. To support the pollinators, I've been leaving the plants and debris in the garden until spring. And then we start the cycle over again.

ISU Team Visits Mini Grant Gardens

By Beula Dvorak

Iowa State leaders of the Growing Together Grant Program visited Linn County mini grant gardens on Monday, July 19th. The Lisbon/Mt. Vernon community gardens at the Lester Buresh Center and Southeast Linn are involved in the grant currently.

After lunch and discussion of what is happening in the gardens related to the grant, the group visited the Mt. Vernon gardens, the Lisbon garden, and the SELinn Food Pantry which receives the donated produce grown in these gardens. Currently, 11 community volunteers water, weed, harvest and maintain the gardens. So far this growing season, SELinn Food Pantry has received just over 200 lbs. of fresh produce which is distributed to food pantry clients.



Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities for LCMG's

Vendors and Societies Wanted For WGF

The 2022 Winter Gardening Fair is scheduled for Saturday, February 19, 2022. We are always looking for vendors who have gardening related items for sale, as well as societies or gardening groups to provide information to our attendees. All vendors/societies who have participated in the past few years will be receiving a "save the date" message. If any MGs are aware of new vendors or societies who might be interested in participating, please provide their contact information to Linda Hinzman at linnieza@aol.com or call her at 319-360-6497.

Speakers Bureau

Speakers Bureau is looking for people to speak at local libraries and the Winter Gardening Fair. Develop a new program or recycle an old one. Let me know if you are interested. Deb Walser (Wabeborah@mchsi.com)

Low Park Demonstration Garden Rose Trellis

By Phil Pfister

The August 10, 2020 derecho took out the Low Park Demo Garden rose trellis, memorial pergola, hoop house, and the roof on the greenhouse. Thanks to the Marion Parks Dept., the roof of the greenhouse was replaced last fall so we could use the greenhouse this past winter and spring.

Randy Dusil, Larry Edwards, Mark Goodsmith and I teamed together to rebuild the rose arbor, which we finished Wednesday, July 26. The design is pretty much the same as the one the derecho destroyed, except this one is anchored much deeper in the ground, and hopefully will withstand a stronger wind. We are pleased to have this part of the Low Park Demonstration Garden reconstructed. Still to go, the pergola and hoop house.



Randy Dusil and Larry Edwards taking a well deserved rest after finishing the rose trellis.

"Gardener at a Glance" - Featuring Jenniffer Dickens

By Beverly Whitmore

If you have Black-eyed Susans, Autumn Joy Sedum, Asters, Sneezeweed and Turtlehead blooming...then you know it's August! I always say June and July just fly by...and it does!! But the beautiful perennials in August are always welcome in my garden and also a joy to look at, and cut as bouquets for friends, family or even yourself!! We begin to think of fall...and reflect back on the months prior...this year was different with drought here in Iowa....and 6" of rain one evening in Marion, we sure needed that rain! As the time passes us, I want to take this month of August to introduce another new Master Gardener...please meet Jenniffer Dickens! (Yes, her name is spelled with 2 f's!)



Jennifer was born and raised in Marion, IA. She loves small dogs and has hopes of having a little terrier in the future. Her favorite tree is the Emperor Japanese Maple; she loves the white trunk and underside of the leaves which are a silvery, shiny color. Jennifer's favorite season is not too far away now...she loves autumn as the bugs and her allergies are both dormant then. She enjoys listening to Iowa State football on the radio as she is raking the fall leaves.

Jennifer applied to the Master Gardener Program because she loved botany in high school and thought this would be a good way to learn more and maybe one day teach others. Jennifer is currently a working lady and worked many hours during the pandemic this past year. As time permits, she is hoping to have more time to commit to the Master Gardener Program now that Covid seems to be reaching an all-time low.

Please welcome Jennifer!

Vandalism Strikes Old MacDonald Farms Gardens

By Beula Dvorak

The partner gardens at Old MacDonald Farms are struggling this growing season. Vandalism has increased and plants and produce are being taken so no produce has been harvested for the Share A Row project. Tomato, squash, pepper and potato plants are looking good in the lower level raised beds, so hopefully some produce will be harvested yet this season. The City is discussing how to address this growing concern. This is one of the hazards of being in public spaces, and we only hope whoever is taking is in need of and making good use of the plants and produce.

Also, I have been informed that Megan Lopata will be leaving the Farm for other employment opportunities the end of July. I extend to her my THANK YOU for being a Master Gardener partner garden who has been a joy to work with and she has persevered through many gardening trials these past several years. Please join me in wishing her well and I look forward to meeting and working with the new Garden Lead at Old MacDonalds Farm in time to come.

Mini-Hydroponics Exhibit at the Linn County Fair

By Phil Pfister

The Linn County Master Gardeners were invited to have a mini-hydroponics exhibit at the Linn County Fair this year. Our exhibit consisted of the ISU Miniponics system, all the components needed to build the system and a commercially available AeroGarden hydroponics System. I started the Miniponics system just over a week before the fair, so the plants were small, but demonstrated how lettuce could grow in a nutrient rich water solution. The AeroGarden had well developed basil plants growing.

The display generated a lot of interest and discussion. We recorded 286 adults and 63 youths, who stopped by the display and discussed the concept and systems. There were more people that paused to look, but I only recorded those who stopped to discuss the concept. What impressed me the most was the number of the young people who stopped and talked about systems they have in their schools. One explained the whole system to me...I was impressed at his knowledge, and on another day, when lunching at the 4-H pavilion, I sat with another youth, who saw me and described the system to his father. I have to say, I was very impressed with the number of schools that are including hydroponics in their Agriculture programs, and the number of students taking an interest.

Thanks to Doug Smith for taking the Friday morning shift, and Sandy Fiegen for covering for me while I enjoyed an excellent pulled pork sandwich at the 4-H pavilion.

There seemed to be enough interest in hydroponics that we are considering having a workshop this fall. If you are interested, please let us know.

Share A Row Update

By Beula Dvorak

It looks like at this time there are 15 registered Master Gardeners and 15 Community Gardeners for our Share A Row project. You may still register at bit.ly/ShareARow and then donate to HACAP or other local food pantry identified as donation pantry. You will find that list as well as the top vegetables to donate at extension.iastate.edu/linn/share-a-row. Since I cannot access the database to retrieve information, if you donate and want to report to me, your numbers will be included in my monthly article.

Reported donations so far thru mid-July:

Southeast Linn Gardens (and donors) ... 233 lbs.

Radishes, lettuce, spinach, kale, cabbage, zucchini, beets, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes,

Olivet Gardens (and Feed Iowa First donor) ... 428 lbs.

Strawberries, lettuce, radishes, greens & herbs, sugar snap peas, beet greens, summer squash, beets, cucumbers, tomatoes

Lowe Park Gardens ... 124 lbs.

Radishes, lettuce, zucchini, romaine, beets, cucumbers, tomatoes

Horizons ... 101 lbs.

Peas, peppers, zucchini, cabbage, carrots (with most of their cabbage given to Feed Iowa First for distribution so no weight on it)

Uptown Marion ... 62 lbs.

Greens, radishes, peas, turnips, cabbage

Total Pounds reported ... 1048 lbs.

LCMG Steering Committee Meeting—July 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order and roll called.

Present: Dyan Anderson, Rose Blank, Randy Dusil, Tracy Hansen, Linda Hofmeister, Cathy Holub, Cindy Lehman, Barb Neal, Jennifer Reed, Deb Walser (remote) and Bev Whitmore. **Also Attending:** Sandy Rosenberger (Coordinator) and Denise Klemp. Lynne Brokaw has submitted her resignation from the committee.

Minutes from the June 1, 2021 meeting were distributed previously and approved.

Monthly Business

Denise presented a report on the NewBo City Market project that continues to receive great volunteer team support. NewBo staff has assigned a new liaison to coordinate with. The gardens are in good shape and harvesting is underway with a variety of produce donated as part of Share-A-Row. A box planter has been repaired and put into service as well as starting a pollinator bed. They are having success with potatoes in a 2nd year hay bale. Due to a damaged pipe, watering is being done via hoses.

A comprehensive 2nd Quarter Project Report list was distributed. An item by item discussion ensued which highlighted the numerous actions that are happening and planned going forward.

Planning is underway for the 2022 Garden Walk with 5 sites reserved.

The Winter Garden Fair is scheduled for February 19, 2022 with Kirkwood Regional Center as the repeat venue.

Coordinator Report

Participation continues at the Marion Taube Park markets. Jo Dillon will be representing at Hiawatha Farmers Market. The desire is to seek other markets in the region to represent LCMG.

Mathew 25 requested a class directed at refugee population which was tried but no attendees were present. Another attempt will be made after seeking more publicity from Mathew 25.

The next Weed and Feed social gathering at Lowe Park is scheduled for July 26 from 7:00 to 8:30.

The Stevens Estate has made a generous donation to the Head House addition to the Lowe Park greenhouse. Marion, which has a new full time horticulturist, has a desire to have their own greenhouse which has led to discussions toward a separate facility or a larger shared facility.

The Corridor Business Journal ran an article featuring our Share-A-Row project.

Barb made motion, seconded by Cindy, to adjourn the meeting at 7:30.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday August 10 at 6:30 pm

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Monday July 26 at 3:00 pm (Note change)

Next Extension Council Meeting: August 9, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,
Randy Dusil

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Linn County Extension **Master Gardeners**
383 Collins Road NE, Suite 201 • Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
ph (319) 377-9839 • Hortline (319) 447-0647



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