

Germinator



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April 2020

LINN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER EVENTS

Steering Committee Meeting*

Extension Office
April 7 • 6:30 pm

Extension Council Meeting*

Extension Office
April 13 • 5:00 pm

Executive Committee Meeting*

Extension Office
April 20 • 3:00 pm

* Meetings held via Webex—email Jean Wilson if you wish login information (jwilson@iastate.edu)

Linn County Master Gardener Charlene Woeste Plant Sale

By Phil Pfister and Karen Woeste, Co-Chairs

Gardeners love spring! A virus will not hold us back from doing the things we love.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many events to be cancelled, postponed or put online. In a letter dated March 20, 2020, Dr. John D. Lawrence, Vice President for Extension and Outreach, stated that all face-to-face meetings have been cancelled through May 9, 2020. Saturday, May 9th was the day scheduled for our plant sale.

Since there are no assurances that life will be back to “normal” by then,

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we have started looking at other ways to still have the plant sale while being in compliance with the restrictions. Not only do we have a number of dedicated customers, but the plant sale is one of the major sources of income for the Linn County Master Gardener Program. So we're looking at other ways to still have the plant sale without the crowds.

One way is a virtual plant sale, where we post a list of plants/quantity, pictures, descriptions, and prices on a site. Interested buyers place their orders, pay by credit card, and select a pick-up date from a list of days/times that we will provide. We will kit the plants for pickup at a location with a large parking lot, where there would be ample space to spread out the pickup stations. The preferred form of payment would be credit card when the order is placed, but we could also accept checks or exact cash when the plants are picked up. We would not be making change at the point of pickup.

We have discussed other options like lotteries, limiting the number of people in the building, spacing the tables out over a large area, but those options still seem to create problems with the potential for people to gather in clumps, or feel like they drew the "short straw", or maybe not attend just so they don't risk exposure.

The virtual sale might not draw as many customers, but it does provide those interested with an opportunity to take part in the sale on a more even plane, and it lowers the physical exposure of the public and Master Gardeners. With so much being moved online, this seems like a venture worth trying.

While this might not raise as much money as we're accustomed to, it's a way for us to reach the community and help them in the springtime as everyone begins to try to put their lives back together in these unprecedented times. If you have additional ideas on how to reach our customers with minimal exposure for everyone, please share them!

Shade Tree Short Course at ISU Campus

By Karen Stewart

The 64th Annual Shade Tree Short Course was held February 25-27, 2020 on the ISU campus with several Linn County Master Gardeners in attendance. Several of us are “repeat attenders”, always finding the variety of keynote speakers and presenters stimulating and informative. We’re hoping to share some of the highlights with you in Germinator articles in the next few months.

The opening session was given by nationally known plantsman Michael A. Dirr, discussing the need for smaller trees to better fit into our changing landscape of smaller residential lot sizes and gardens. Dr. Dirr is professor emeritus, Horticulture, University of Georgia and author of Manual of Woody Landscape Plants – now in its 6th edition. As new house sizes grow, space for landscape material tends to shrink. Dr. Dirr highlighted the newest and best small-stature trees for commercial and residential use, highlighting those that would thrive in Iowa. He shared many photographs of trees he grows in his own garden in Georgia, featuring ones that would be cold hardy in Iowa.

In addition to needs for trees of narrower width, Dr. Dirr and the next speaker, Keith Warren, have been working with many utility companies to develop trees that will maintain lower heights so that they could be planted under utility wires, thus beautifying and camouflaging utility eyesores. Their goal is to develop trees that will remain under 30 feet in height. One utility company in the northeast estimates spending over \$200 million on tree maintenance annually. They are now working with and funding research at east coast universities and arboretums to channel some of their maintenance money into developing new varieties of small shade and flowering trees. The continuing challenge is to develop trees with winter hardiness of zone 4 or 5.

The next opening session was presented by Keith Warren, retired Director of Product Development with J. Frank Schmidt & Son in Boring, Oregon. He, too, featured an informative power point on newer varieties of flowering trees that would be available now or in the near future, meeting the needs for smaller size and cold hardiness.

These two men have collaborated on a book The Tree Book: Superior Selections for Landscapes, Streetscapes, and Gardens, Timber Press, 2019. This book was available at the conference and was being discussed positively by several I shared conversations with. Although the handouts from these two men had many suggested varieties of trees, they were too long to mention in this article. If you’d like to have copies of their suggestions, feel free to let Jean know, and we’ll work together to get them to you.

WMT IHeart Outdoor Living Show

By: Barb Wing and Sue Usher, Co-chairs

The WMT IHeart Outdoor Living Show was held Saturday and Sunday, March 7th and 8th, at the former Younkers store in Lindale Mall.

It seems the move from Hawkeye Downs to this location was a very positive factor in the increased attendance. Nearly 2000 people came through the doors, with many of them making their way to our booth. Many thanks go to Carol Elliott, Wil Carew, Debbie Main, Steve Bartlett and Lynne Brokaw who were the featured speakers during both days of the show.

We handed out a lot of publications, and answered many questions. Numerous attendees returned several times to our booth as they thought of more questions to ask. There were no "Stump the Master Gardener" question that we could not handle as the crew that worked the event were knowledgeable in many areas of gardening.

With the weather being so mild and spring-like, we want to thank all those who helped make this event a success. Your hard work and willingness to share of your time and knowledge is to be commended.



Bev Whitmore and Bev Witmer... or...is it Bev Witmer and Bev Whitmore, volunteering at the Outdoor Living Show!

Awards Banquet Tentatively Changed to May 18

By Sam Krumbholz and Jane Schlidroth, Co-Chairs

The Master Gardener Awards Banquet that was scheduled for April 20th has now been moved to May 18th. We will still gather at the Flamingo and have a scrumptious supper. Our committee has already been at work planning a few new surprises for all of you! Hopefully our lives will be back to normal and we can look back on the past year of accomplishments and enjoy our memories.

Please watch future emails from Jean for further information regarding the Awards Banquet.

LCMG Mourn Loss of Long Time Member—Ellen Skripsky

By Beth Roof

Linn County Master Gardeners lost a long time member and lady of the garden, Ellen Skripsky.

Member of the class of 1988, Ellen was a Lifetime Master Gardener and completed the Master Composter Program. She had contagious kindness. Always smiling and gentle with advice, whether presenting a program at the Winter Gardening Fair or in the community. Ellen served on the Steering Committee.

She opened her garden for numerous garden walks and regularly brought bouquets into the Master Gardener office when it was located on 7th Avenue in Marion. She chaired the Awards Banquet in the late 1990's and early 2000's when it was held at The Indian Creek Country Club in Marion. Ellen solicited a multitude of door prizes from area businesses to give to everyone in attendance. Garden ornaments, tools, gold-plated flowers, gifts cards, even coupons for frozen turkeys! Ellen made sure that everyone went home with one, if not two sizable gifts.

Ellen's daughter Peggy shared with me that Ellen loved the Master Gardeners. When Ellen's mobility decreased she continued to be active in the program as a regular cashier at the plant sale, attending whatever events she could. Another special gardener who made an impact in the 31 years she was with us as a Linn County Master Gardener.

Her obituary can be found at <https://www.thegazette.com/obituaries/ellen-skripsky-20200311-0000203282-01>



Ellen Skripsky

Low Park Demonstration Gardens Needs Volunteers

By Brenda Garbe

Please put this on your calendars the 3rd and 4th week of May dependent on the weather. Working on Friday morning 8:00-11:00 or afternoon 1:00-4:00; and Saturday morning 8:00-11:00. This is all subject to CDC recommendations for group sizes and ISU policy. We may be working alone or in really small groups. This is an addition to the Lead Gardeners' regular garden work sessions on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings.

Here is a summary of the tasks we have ahead of us in anticipation of the July Garden Walk: moving a mailbox post, repairing the white picket fence, leveling or rearranging flagstone paths, erecting our metal teepee, and iron trellis, stabilizing wood fence, moving wooden arch and moving the green arch, installing a metal trellis and signage on posts. Many of these tasks could be handled by one person and I would be happy to give you more details if you want to undertake something solo.



East side of demonstration gardens.



Butterfly garden and west side of demonstration gardens.

We're also in need a few items that you may have in your yards and willing part with. A metal trellis or archway, a wood birdhouse, some clear plexiglass (2 pieces about 12" x 30"). Contact me with any information and questions.

Hopefully we'll be able to work in the gardens, stay healthy.

Coordinator Comments

By: Jean Wilson



I had originally planned to write about all of our upcoming events, but we know how that turned out!

ISU has sent out guidelines regarding meetings, travel between extension offices, and other considerations.

RaeAnn met with all county staff and we decided the wisest course of action was to close the office to the public in order to hopefully minimize the possible spread of the coronavirus.

What does this mean for us? A lot of postponements and cancellations to handle. I hope I have everything updated on our calendar, our website, our Extension calendar, and on our Facebook page (and with all the speakers, hotels, publicity, and other reservations we've made). And we've sent out email to all who registered for events. And an email to everyone on our Constant Contact list. A lot of emails ...

This means more virtual meetings – or no meetings at all. I can easily set up meetings on the computer but as we all know, it's just not the same as face-to-face meetings. However, it might be necessary for the next few weeks. We'll be revisiting our "closed" policy on a weekly basis and will take guidance from public health officials on how to handle things.

Here's a summary of what's going on:

- The Extension Office is closed to the public (this includes volunteers). This is on a week-by-week basis. I'll send out an email update about it every week.
- The Hort Line is managed remotely (volunteers are not in the office).
- The Melinda Myers talk is canceled; we are considering rescheduling later this year or next year.
- New Bo classes are canceled through the spring. We hope to regroup in the fall.
- March and April library talks are canceled.
- The Spring Banquet is rescheduled to May 18 at the Flamingo. I'll be sending out the official invitations later.
- Our Mt. Vernon classes at the Lester Buresh Center are canceled.
- Eco-Fest on April 18 has been canceled.

I think that's all of it, at least for now. Please keep an eye on your email for all the latest updates. It's really the best way for me to stay in touch with you all!

March 3, 2020— Steering Committee Meeting—DRAFT

The meeting was called to order and roll called.

Present: Rose Blank, Lynne Brokaw, Julie Clemens, Randy Dusil, Tracy Hansen, Linda Hofmeister, Jan Knott, Barb Neal, Jennifer Reed, Bev Whitmore and Diane Wiesenfeld. **Absent:** Diane Brooks, Cindy Lehman (excused) and Deb Walser (excused). **Also Attending:** Jean Wilson (MG Coordinator), Julie Stark, Kathy Hughes and Wanda Lunn.

Minutes from the February 4, 2020 meeting were approved.

Linn County Director Report:

RaeAnn presented to the group with an overview of ISU Extension and Outreach beginning with nationwide Land Grant History terms introduced in 1862 through to the current statewide extension organizational chart and key Linn County Strategic Plan initiatives. Iowa state became the first to accept the terms set forth under the Smith-Lever act in 1914 establishing a cooperative extension and Linn County followed in 1915. The governing responsibilities of the Extension Council were discussed and nominations are currently being accepted to fill vacancies on that body. Linn County is currently in Region 10 along with Benton and Jones Counties. The desired hiring of a Communications Director is being considered as a forthcoming objective.

Discussion With Project Leaders

Germinator – Julie and Kathy were present to report on and discuss the Germinator project. A recurring challenge is generating creative and research based content of interest. There is always a need for volunteer writers to assist in this effort. Discussion was held on ideas for fresh features as follows:

- More frequent member spotlights were suggested. Interviewers are always invited and a set list of questions may simplify this task. In addition, membership nominations for those being featured may be more effective than asking for those who may wish to be the subject.
- Timely gardening tips based on the season would be helpful.
- Offering some of the frequent or unusual Hortline questions could be of interest as well as educational.
- A "Where Am I" feature could spark interest by posting a question from a scene at one of the Master Gardener projects.

Noelridge Greenhouse and Garden – Wanda reported on the programming at Noelridge and expressed the need for Master Gardener guides for the frequent group tours that are held. There is generally a great group of Friends of Noelridge helpers making work sessions well attended and enjoyable. The Easter Showcase on April 12 and the Mother's Day Open House are upcoming events that also welcomes volunteer opportunities.

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Coordinator Report:

The Winter Garden Fair wrap up is near complete. Surveys have been distributed for evaluation and a final financial accounting will be completed soon.

A policy change was suggested and approved at the meeting. The Awards Committee membership will be changed to eliminate the requirement for an Extension Council member to Chair that group.

Applications are now open for this years group of trainees with classes beginning in September. The "flipped classroom" format and mentor pairing have been successful and will continue. One session will be held in Vinton as part of partnering with Benton County.

March 11th is scheduled for a presentation to Marion Parks on the Greenhouse addition.

A \$2,000 Growing Together Grant has been received which will be used to provide accessible beds at Marion Donation Gardens.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday April 7, 2020, 6:30 pm at the Extension Office

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Monday March 16, 2020, 3:00 pm at the Extension Office

Respectfully Submitted,

Randy Dusil

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