

Germinator



Vol. 32, No. 6 Editors: Julie Stark/Kathy Hughes

June 2021

LINN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER EVENTS

Steering Committee Meeting

Extension Office
June 1 • 6:30 pm

Executive Committee Meeting

Extension Office
June 24 • 3:00 pm

Extension Council Meeting

Extension Office
June 14 • 5:00 pm

What's Inside...

- Coordinator Message—Page 2
- Plant Sale Wrap-Up—Pages 3-4
- Meet Your Current Steering Committee Member—Page 4
- Share A Row—Page 5
- Migratory "Bird Friendly" Celebration —Page 6
- "Gardener at a Glance"—Pages 7-8
- Perennial Garden—Page 8
- COG Update—Pages 9-10
- Steering Committee Report—Page 11

Germinator Deadline



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

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

Coordinator Message:



My first month has really flown by and every time someone asks me how I like my new job I tell them that I love it! Despite a steep learning curve for learning all of the new volunteers, MG programs, and just the daily workings of an Extension Office, I'm enjoying it all. All of the volunteers and extension staff have been so welcoming and helpful.

I started off my job jumping headfirst into the Plant Sale and soon found out that it's a well-oiled machine and through an amazing team, including Phil, Karen and others, it's put on every year without a hitch. The fact that we were the only "in-person" plant sale in town helped us do well financially. Gardeners were thrilled to be able to come and shop our plants instead of just seeing them online. All of you who helped put it on are truly impressive!

I've mentioned that I've used a volunteer signup software called Signup Genius at my last job and I would like to trial it with a few of the MG volunteer opportunities. It has a lot of advantages but most importantly if you're the person trying to get people to sign up for an event or jobs it can be incredibly challenging keeping up with all of the emails, schedule changes, etc. We'll try it out and see how everyone likes it and if it's successful we can roll it out to whatever program it would work well for.

By now, hopefully you've all heard about our Share a Row Program. Last year 22,000 lbs. of produce were donated to food pantries and this year our goal is 30,000. I think this is very doable. We're going to be on the KCRG Show You Care advertisements this summer and that will really increase the public's awareness. We would love to see lots of MGs involved but we realize that not everyone is a vegetable grower, so if you're not, pass the information on to a friend or family member. If you also have a church, community group, or another group who might be interested, feel free to send them the link: extension.iastate.edu/linn/share-a-row.

Interest in gardening has really gone up throughout COVID and that trend has continued. We've received over 20 applicants for the fall MG program and applications will be accepted until July. Speaking of that, although I've been a lifetime gardener, I certainly could benefit from the formal training that you all have taken, so I'll be taking the course this fall as well. It's always been on my bucket list to be a MG so I'm thrilled to be able to do it now.

I've sent information out to everyone about plant identification apps for your phone. I find them to be very useful and it sounds like quite a few of you do too. They're particularly helpful if you're out at an event and need to figure out a plant species. Here are some of people's favorites: Picture This, Google Lens, Plant Net, or I Naturalist. If anyone has another one that they like let me know!

Finally, I want to thank Jean, your last coordinator, for all of her hard work in getting things ready for the next coordinator. She put so much time and effort into making sure that it was an easy transition for the next person. Thanks Jean!

Until Next Month, Sandy

Charlene Woeste Plant Sale

Chairs: Karen Woeste & Phil Pfister

We are pleased to report a return to an in-person plant sale this year. Last year's virtual sale was a success, but being able to interface directly with our customers really felt great. Face masks were required, and the sale was laid out with a focus on spacing the plants to provide for more social distancing, which meant some of the sun plants were set up outside. To accommodate this, we changed the layout so the entrance to the building was on the east side, historically the exit, and the exit was on the south side which has traditionally been the entrance. Thanks to the table leads and Extension staff for helping think through the various layout options, keeping the focus on compliance with Covid-19 guidelines, customer flow and minimizing bottlenecks.

We had an excellent quantity and variety of plants that were donated by Master Gardeners from their gardens, grown at Wanda Ohrt's home, the perennial nursery at Lowe Park, and by the Master Gardeners at the Lowe Park Greenhouse. The quality of plants was excellent, which speaks to the Master Gardener's skills and dedication to putting on a plant sale that we can all be proud of.



Left: Louise Harn and Becky Rae holding barn quilts painted by Pat Beaty; center: succulents grown at the Lowe Park Greenhouse; right: Larry Edwards amongst tomato plants ready to sell.

Again, this year, many Master Gardeners participated in the plant sale, starting weeks before, right up to and including during the plant sale. Volunteer efforts included digging, prep, transporting, and pricing plants, setting up the sale area the day before and again the morning of the sale, displaying the plants, assisting customers, cleaning up and returning the Legion Hall to pre-sale setup, transporting leftover plants, recycling the left-over boxes, etc.

Sixty-three volunteers worked the plant sale on Friday and Saturday, but it takes a lot of Master Gardeners working before as well as



Customers lining up outside the Legion for the sale to begin.

Continued page 4

Continued from page 3

during the sale to put on a successful event. Our thanks to all of you who helped with this great event.

We are very pleased to report gross income of \$13,791. Attendance was down some, but that didn't seem to have a negative impact on the sales.

Special thanks to everyone on Extension Staff who helped make the sale a success as well. We greatly appreciate all your input and support.

Looking towards the 2022 plant sale, we need volunteers to help weed the perennial beds to keep the stock plants growing for next year. If you can help, please contact Karen Woeste at hab319kiowa@gmail.com.



Plant sale co-chair, Karen Woeste, briefing Master Gardener volunteers prior to the sale.

Meet Your Current Steering Committee

By Linda Hofmeister, Chair

This is the sixth article highlighting members of the Steering Committee. This month we hear from **Barb Neal**.

My name is Barb Neal. I was born and raised in Mount Vernon. I have been married for 51 years, have four children and nine grandchildren. Everyone lives in close proximity to Mount Vernon, with the most distant living in Decorah. I am truly blessed to have everyone near. Family is the MOST IMPORTANT part of my life.



I am now retired. My working years were in banking. I worked in many capacities, from part-time drive-up teller to branch supervisor. Currently, I am attending Kirkwood Community College. My goal is to finally complete my college degree. Granted it is an AA, instead of a BA, but, nevertheless, it is a degree and that is my goal. As I have reflected on my life, not graduating from college is the one, and only, thing I have ever regretted. Now I am getting that accomplished.

I became a Master Gardener with the class of 2015. I tell everyone "I am a Master Gardener, but I am a master of nothing!" I love the program. I have met an amazing group of people with so much knowledge and a willingness to share it with me. My primary interest is landscaping (flowers, shrubs, trees, etc.). My husband grows a HUGE garden, so I just stay out of his way (unless I am offering new tips and advice I have gleaned from the Master Gardeners). I spend hours/days in August and September canning and freezing the bountiful crops.

I thoroughly enjoy being a scribe for the Hortline and listening/learning from the leads. I have done volunteer work at Lowe Park, the Plant Sale, the Winter Garden Fair and the Garden Walk. I was a co-chair for the Garden Walk in 2019. Currently, I am a member of the Steering Committee. I applied for this position to become more informed of the inner workings of the Master Gardener Program. My hope is to provide some input and ideas/suggestions for the future.

Share A Row

By Beula Dvorak

Connect, Grow, Share a Row (Now to be known as just Share A Row) is back in full force for the 2021 growing season. All Master Gardeners are invited to participate in this program as the goal has been set to increase MG participation and increase our produce donation to HACAP/food pantries to 30,000 lbs. for this growing season.

HACAP and all the local food pantries have seen an increase in the number of families utilizing the food pantries during 2020 – due to the COVID pandemic and the August derecho. The food insecure remains approximately 1 in 8 people in Linn County. Our help in providing fresh produce is more critical than ever.

How can you help?

- ◆ Volunteer your working services at one of the community gardens working to grow vegetables for the food insecure.
- ◆ With a group you might belong to start a new community garden. MGs are here to assist.
- ◆ Grow an extra row (or more) of produce in your garden specifically to donate to HACAP.
- ◆ Donate any extra produce from your garden that you might otherwise give away or throw away.
- ◆ Talk to your family, friends & neighbors and encourage them to participate in this program. Pick up a flyer at the extension office to share with them.

Next Steps:

- ◆ Sign up online at bit.ly/ShareARow
- ◆ Print out the email you receive and use your Grower ID Number as identification when you donate produce at a participating food pantry. (If you participated before, yes you do need to register and receive a new ID number)
- ◆ Grow those extra plants.
- ◆ Donate produce that is fresh and free from soil, pest/disease at HACAP or other participating food pantry.
- ◆ When you donate, the pantry will document and weigh your produce and report pounds of produce donated back to our MG program on a regular basis. Watch future issues of the *Germinator* for ongoing reports.

For a list of the Top 13 Vegetables to donate and a List of participating food pantries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/share-a-row

First Annual Migratory "Bird Friendly" Celebration

By Bev Whitmore

On Saturday, May 8th, the City of Marion held its first Annual Migratory Bird Celebration "Bird Friendly" event at Thomas Park from noon to 3 pm. The partners who participated in the event were: Bird Friendly Iowa, Cedar Rapids Audubon Society, Friends of Marion Parks, Iowa BIG, Iowa Young Birders, Linn County Conservation, Linn County Master Gardeners, Marion Parks & Recreation, Marion Public Library, The R.A.R.E., Group, and Trees Forever.

Due to the aftermath of so many trees lost in the August 10th Derecho storm, this event was to encourage the community to provide food as well as shelter for our feathered friends. Visitors were given a "passport" to get stamped at each of the activity stations. The first 90 visitors to get their passport fully stamped could turn their passport in for a free birdhouse. Mary Weber, Horticulturist for the City of Marion, invited Linn County Master Gardeners to participate in providing an activity station.



Master Gardeners, Fran Potratz and Bev Whitmore, volunteered to show and teach children, parents and visitors how to create seed starter pots from strips of black and white newspaper; a simple technique that helps families save money rather than buying peat pots or cow pots. The strips of black and white newspaper are biodegradable, and the ink is made from soy; both are earth friendly making the earthworms happy. Fran would show the visitors how to roll a strip of the newspaper around a "wooden pot maker" tool, tuck in the bottom end of the newspaper and twist this on the round wooden disc, which is part of the part maker tool. The children were initially a bit apprehensive to put their fingers into the seed starting mix, which was provided by the Lowe Park Greenhouse volunteers. However, with Fran's assurance that the mix wasn't dirt and that they wouldn't get their hands dirty, the children would fill their paper pot. Then, Bev would "stamp" their passport and offer the children a choice of sunflower seeds to plant, either "Teddy Bear" with yellow flowers getting about 2' tall or "Velvet Queen" with dark orange or reddish flowers getting 5-6' tall. The "Teddy Bear" sunflower seeds were the most popular with the children. Bev provided instructions on planting the seeds about 1/2" - 1" deep in the seed starting mix, watering, and caring for the plant. She also explained that in the fall, the flower head will provide seeds, which are food for the birds.



Mary Weber was the organizer of this first annual "Bird Friendly" event and it is her hope that the Linn County Master Gardeners and the City of Marion can join together for future events. All 90 bird houses were distributed to participants who visited each activity station. Over 200 visitors came out in the chilly weather to participate. Thanks to a retiree who donated the 90 bird houses!

"Gardener at a Glance" - Featuring Sarah Vieth

By Beverly Whitmore

We all look forward to the month of June, don't we? June is the month with the longest daylight hours in the Northern Hemisphere and the month of the shortest daylight hours of the year in the Southern Hemisphere. In June we get to enjoy the beautiful blooms of garden phlox, peonies, dark purple Alliums, Shasta Daisies and so many more pretty flowers! It is also this month that I get to introduce you to another new Master Gardener, Sarah Vieth.



Sarah grew up as a city girl in the Quad Cities with four brothers and sisters. Each year when school was out, they got to spend several weeks of their summer break with their grandparents, as well as aunts and uncles on their farms in southeast Iowa. That is where Sarah developed her love of gardening, harvesting and canning fruits and vegetables, as well as a general love of being outdoors in nature.

If you have questions about raised bed or straw bale gardening, be sure to ask Sarah, she has tried both. Currently she has switched over to container gardening for tomatoes, peppers and various herbs and has a tradition of making salsa to eat and share with friends and family.

Sarah has been living in the Cedar Rapids area since moving here right out of college. She has been married for 17 years and a cat named, Gabby, completes her family.

When I asked Sarah about her favorite flower...she answered the gladiolus. She plants them so she can take bunches of cut flowers each week and bring them inside to appreciate the colorful bouquets throughout the house from summer through mid-fall. She also has a blue, Rose of Sharon in her yard from her grandmother's yard that is very special to her.

Sarah's favorite season is summer. She likes to see all of the flowers in bloom, work out in the yard and get her hands dirty planting, watering and pruning things. She enjoys the early sunrise and later sunsets and watching the hummingbirds, bees, fireflies and hearing the locust sing.

She recently retired and decided it was a good time to apply to the Master Gardener Program. It was something she always wanted to do, but limited by her work, travel and schedule.

The Master Gardener program gave Sarah valuable information about native shrubs and trees and how and when to care for them. She said she will be using this insight to replant her yard and to help advise friends and neighbors as they replace items in their landscapes from the Derecho damage. She picked up great information about native pollinators and plans to continue into her second year of raising native bees and trying some new annuals and perennials to attract more of them across the seasons.

Sarah keeps busy outside of the Master Gardener Program by teaching English to immigrants through the Catherine McAuley tutoring program, she volunteers at her church, and coaches Girls on the Run. She loves to cook and try out new recipes with friends and neighbors. She loves to

Continued page 8

teach and is learning Arabic. Sarah is very active and enjoys working out on a daily basis, including cardio, yoga and weight training. Her husband and her travel to one of the National Parks to hike and explore each summer and typically take a getaway vacation to a tropical island in the winter. Their favorite is Maui, Hawaii. When her husband joins her in retirement this spring, she is hoping they will be able to do additional traveling and see more of the USA. Their goal is to visit all the National Parks and all 50 states.

Look for Sarah who volunteers at the Noelridge Greenhouse. She is also interested in helping with the Winter Gardening Fairs and some of the community gardens...she is anxious to meet fellow master gardeners! Welcome Sarah!

Perennial Garden June 2021

By Judi Dolezal

The perennial garden is a constant work in progress. Because of the heavy soil, some plants don't perform as envisioned or compared to my home garden and even from one side of the garden to the other.

The garden is divided in two by a stone pathway. One side is only white blooming plants, the other multi-color. With thanks to Devon Dietz, he suggested and contributed a trellis supporting a Sweet Autumn Clematis. It is the highlight of the white garden adding visual interest, scent, and color in the fall. Hopefully, we can find a permanent means of anchoring the trellis to withstand a derecho!

The pathway is traditionally lined with short white zinnias on one side and short yellow marigolds on the other. Both annuals provide reliable color from spring thru the final freeze.

A Red Twig Dogwood surrounded by smooth field rock is the focus of the multi-color garden. Currently, I am trying different plants that will provide a bright cheerful color display from summer to fall when other perennials have finished their show.

There is a lot of sedum in both gardens, that is quickly becoming my favorite garden helper. It provides groundcover, keeps weeds down in problem areas, is very forgiving, easy to pull out when unwanted, and is bright green for a nice contrast against the mulch.

Spring is alive with daffodils, dwarf iris, orange oriental poppies and peonies. Come visit and smell the Peonies!



Community Outreach Gardens (COG) Update

By Beula Dvorak

After the year 2020 which was consumed by COVID and a derecho, the community gardens are getting planted with enthusiasm about growing fresh produce for food insecure clients and the community through local food pantries. Nearly 100 tomato, cabbage, eggplant and pepper plants left from the Master Gardener plant sale have been given to various community outreach garden partners to be used in their garden.

Olivet - Due to a pending parking lot (and building) expansion, the garden beds have been replaced and relocated. On Day of Caring, a stellar group from Mt. Mercy University helped fill the beds with compost and bagged soil (photo right). We also planted onions, lettuce, day lilies and calla lilies. Mulch was spread between the beds. The gardens are looking good and ready to receive more plants and seeds. Planting of tomatoes and peppers was scheduled for Tuesday, May 18. The three Kids' Garden Club beds are ready for the junior gardeners to take over, along with their Master Gardener guide, Sylvia Street.



Department of Corrections - On Saturday, May 22 a group of 5 residents, 2 staff and Master Gardeners, Gail Denny and Beula Dvorak, weeded beds and planted rhubarb, asparagus, green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers (photo right). In the next couple of weeks residents will spread new mulch between the beds as well as around the newly planted rhubarb and asparagus.



Horizons – The new Horizons garden staff, Mary Griffin, is excited to be working with Master Gardeners this year. Master Gardener, Dyan Anderson, is our garden liaison and she has been assisting Horizon volunteers in getting their beds planted (photo right). Peas and cabbage plants have been provided by Feed Iowa First. Day of Caring volunteers weeded the beds and walkways and added more soil to the empty beds and mulch to the walkways. The volunteers also poked holes in the irrigation system as the holes were mostly blocked. Tomatoes and peppers will be planted in the coming week.



Catherine McAuley – Tomato, cabbage, peppers and eggplant plants left from the Master Gardener plant sale were given to CMC for planting. A plan for educational sessions are still being worked out. If any Master

Continued page 10

Continued from page 9

Gardener is interested in assisting with providing some sessions in the evening for CMC gardeners, please let Beula Dvorak know immediately.

Southeast Linn Community Center - On Saturday May 15th 12 community volunteers gathered to help prep the raised beds at the Mt. Vernon Wellness Center. Old soil was removed and new amended soil (compost, peat & perlite) was added making the beds ready for planting. They planted radishes, lettuce, spinach, peas and cabbage. Warm weather crops will be planted one day during the week of May 24th. Everything has been planted at the Lisbon site. Rhubarb and asparagus was planted this spring to provide some perennial favorites to the pantry clients. The first donations of lettuce and radishes have been received and given out to pantry members. Two educational sessions on vegetable container gardening have been provided – one at the MV Wellness Center and one at Meyers Meadow Retirement Center in Lisbon. Each attendee planted a container with a vegetable of their choice (many tomatoes) that was taken home. Not only do we want to provide additional produce through the food pantries, but we are going to teach and encourage more to grow some of their own fresh produce.

Lowes Donation Gardens – Thank you to Mark and Chris Goodsmith for getting the Lowes donation garden beds cleaned up and planted (photo right). A variety of veggies have been planted which will be donated to a local food pantry.



There are still many opportunities to get involved with the Community Outreach Garden Project. Please contact Beula Dvorak or Jane Schildroth to learn about such opportunities.

LCMG Steering Committee Meeting—May 4, 2021

Linda Hofmeister called the meeting to order and led roll call. **Present:** Dyan Anderson, Rose Blank, Lynne Brokaw, Tracy Hansen, Cathy Holub, Linda Hofmeister, Cindy Lehman, Gina Milroy, Barb Neal, Jennifer Reed and Bev Whitmore. **Absent:** Randy Dusil (excused), Diane Brooks and Deb Walsler. **Also Attending:** RaeAnn Gordon, Johanna Rahbusch, Sandy Rosenberger and Michelle Sillman.

Minutes from the April 6, 2021 meeting were approved as distributed.

Monthly Business

- ◆ The April 2021 financial reports were distributed and discussed; Johanna Rahbusch answered questions.
- ◆ RaeAnn Gordon introduced our new MG/Horticulture Outreach Coordinator Sandy Rosenberger. Welcome, Sandy!
- ◆ The Judy Stevens Memorial has been recommended by the family as a fruit tree(s) at the Lowe Park Orchard. Phil Pfister suggested an Espalier Collection. Phil is drafting a plan and proposed layout to submit to Mike and Seth from the Marion Parks Department on an Espalier Collection for Lowe Park. Patty Reisinger from Trees Forever is very supportive of this concept.
- ◆ The Plant Sale is this coming Saturday, May 8 at the Marion Legion Hall. They need boxes.
- ◆ The Share a Row program will be promoted at the plant sale. All MGs are encouraged to participate, even with one plant.
- ◆ Rose Blank announced that the FSPA grant has been approved for \$4,850. The next step is to submit the request for payment paperwork (April 16 letter). The funds will go to the Local Garden Leader Program to expand community gardens, particularly in the immigrant population.
- ◆ The next MG Virtual Meet-up is set for May 17 at 6:30 PM with Becki Lynch as host from Florida.
- ◆ Bev Whitmore and Fran Potratz will represent the LCMG at the event on Saturday, May 8 where Marion is being designated as a Bird Friendly Iowa Community.
- ◆ This is the last Steering Committee Meeting held via ZOOM. Next month's meeting will be held in person at the Extension Large Conference Room.

Regional Director Update:

- ◆ Since RaeAnn is now the Regional Director, a search for an Extension Director is underway.

Barb Neal moved to adjourn; Jennifer Reed seconded it. Meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Tuesday, June 1 at 6:30 pm at the Extension office

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Monday, May 17 at 3:00 pm at the Extension office

Next Extension Council Meeting: May 10

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Reed

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



This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext.