### MG EVENTS

**Steering Committee Mtg.**
Extension Office
February 4 • 6:30 pm

**Winter Gardening Fair**
Volunteer Training
Kirkwood—Room 343 Cedar Hall
February 14 • 5:00 pm

**Winter Gardening Fair**
Kirkwood Community College
February 15 • 8:30 am—3:30 pm

**February Library Classes**
Hiawatha Library
*Ponds and Water Features*
February 3 • 6:30-7:30 pm
*Plants Deeply Rooted in History*
February 10 • 6:30-7:30 pm
*Straw Bale Gardening*
February 24 • 6:30-7:30 pm

**Ely Library**
*Iowa’s Gardens—More than Just Pretty Places*
February 6 • 6:30-7:30 pm

**Plant This Year for Next Winter Interest**
February 13 • 6:30-7:30 pm

**Colorful Cottage Gardens**
February 20 • 6:30-7:30 pm

**Heavenly Hydrangeas**
February 27 • 6:30-7:30 pm

**Expert Ed Classes**
Linn County Extension Office
*Efficient Home Landscape Irrigation*
February 1 • 1:00 pm

*Soil Fertility Analysis for Residential Horticulture*
March 1 • 1:00 pm

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### Winter Gardening Fair—February 15! It’s Almost Here!

If the snow stays away, we look forward to another fantastic Winter Gardening Fair on Saturday, February 15.

Thanks to those who have already volunteered; you will receive your assignments soon. A few more volunteers are needed, so if you have not volunteered and want to join the fun, contact Elizabeth Ward as soon as possible.

More information on the Winter Gardening Fair volunteer opportunities are on page 2.

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- Attachment—WMT Outdoor Living Show Volunteer Sign-up Form

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"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.”
— Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)
Winter Gardening Fair

By Jane Schildroth

Registrations continue to come in to the Kirkwood staff who plan to deal with approximately 600 eager participants in this year’s fair. If somehow you managed to miss out on the pre-event advertising, everything you need to know is available at: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/news/winter-gardening-fair-2014. Some sessions are “Full” and registrants have been directed to make other class choices for the day. For Master Gardeners, we hope your choices are simple: 1) Be a presenter OR 2) Be a volunteer.

We need most current MG’s to make this day a good one for our guests. Hopefully you have completed and returned the form that was emailed to you in January. Joan West is in charge of assigning and managing all volunteers for the preparation, event, and clean-up, so if you have a specific question, please contact her at jkhw97@gmail.com or (319) 551-0628. If you did not receive a volunteer assignment and you want one, please let Joan know. We do not want you to be left out!

The previews presented by Master Gardeners have now been completed and many of us chalked up education hours as we continued our learning and socialized with others we may not have seen for some time. Twenty-three attendees at some of the sessions is an outstanding turn-out!

The WGF Committee has spent many hours in meetings, brainstorming for a great combination of topics to meet the needs of first-time attendees and seasoned gardeners as well. A large number of our own experts will join regional speakers to share research and experience and provide inspiration. With everyone following through on the responsibilities assigned, this event looks to be another strong outreach program for Linn County Master Gardeners. Remember to proudly wear your green MG shirt on February 15 – and we’ll see you at the volunteer training at 5:00 P.M. on February 14 at Kirkwood, in Room 343 Cedar Hall.
2014 Buchanan County Master Gardener Symposium

By Ashley Sherrets, Buchanan County Agriculture/Horticulture Program Coordinator

What chilly temperatures we’ve been having these past few weeks! With the approach of February the Buchanan County Master Gardener Symposium will be held, and will bring warm thoughts of spring to all!

Our Symposium will be held on Saturday, February 22, 2014, at the First Presbyterian Church, 116 6th Avenue NW, Independence, Iowa. Similar to the past, pre-registration before February 1, will cost $25, and $30 thereafter. Below is our symposium flyer and we would love it if you could share it with your friends and family! Any questions can be sent to me at sherrets@iastate.edu or 319-334-7161. We hope you’ll join us for the 8th Annual Symposium.

Thank you and stay warm!

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Germinator Contributor Needed:

A volunteer is needed to prepare several items for each issue of the Germinator: "hot topics" or gardening FAQ, upcoming educational events around Iowa and the region. Germinator deadline is the 20th of the month. For more information, contact Jean Murray at jeanm3@gmail.com.
WMT Outdoor Living Show

By Tim Murphy

The Annual “WMT Outdoor Living Show” is a great opportunity to work alongside other MGs sharing information with the public. Linn County Master Gardeners will again be participating in the Show sponsored by King’s Concrete, Saturday March 8th and Sunday March 9th, at Hawkeye Dows Convention Center. Master Gardeners will staff an information/education booth for the public, as well as present helpful gardening seminars throughout the weekend. YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! Included with the Germinator is a VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET with the shift times and shift duties for each day of the event. If you would like to volunteer to be a Presenter at this show, please contact Sue Usher today (366-5820).

Please note that Master Gardeners, Master Composters and Master Gardener Interns who volunteer for a work shift will have free access to that day’s show, and there is no parking fee for this event. Remember to wear your MG badge. The price at the door for general admittance is $3.00.

Further questions about the WMT Show should be directed to Tim Murphy (395-0361), Sue Usher (366-5820) or Karen Woeste (294-5484) who are Co-Chairing the event.

Please complete the volunteer sign-up form that is included with this publication and return it in person, or via email to Elizabeth Ward, eward@iastate.edu at the Extension Office by FRIDAY, February 21. Shift assignments will be sent out the following week via email. Your expertise, time and volunteer spirit is greatly appreciated.

Rain Garden Photos/Information Needed

Megan Murphey from Cedar Rapids Utilities is writing an article on rain gardens and is wondering if any Linn County Master Gardener has one in their yard that is not completely covered with snow. She would like some photos and maybe a little information on the plants and their installation. If you have, or know of anyone who has, a rain garden and would be willing to share information with Megan, please contact Jean Minehart at jeanminehart@live.com.
WMT Outdoor Living Show  
Sponsored by WMT 600 AM & Mix 96.5 and King’s Concrete  
Saturday, March 8th and Sunday, March 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2013  
Hawkeye Downs Exposition Hall

**VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET**

Name: ________________________________ Phone: ________________

E-mail: _________________________________________________________

Volunteers are needed to staff the Master Gardener informational booth at this year’s show. For each work shift as follows: 2 INFORMATION DESK (ID), 2 PLANT DOCTORS (PD), and a MASTER COMPOSTERS (MC)

**Further questions about the WMT show should be directed to MG’s Sue Usher, Karen Woeste or Tim Murphy.**

Tim can be reached at: 395-0361  
Sue can be reached at: 366-5820  
Karen can be reached at: 294-5484

Circle the preferred duty for the work shift(s) you are available to work. You may volunteer for multiple shifts and days.

Sat., March 9\textsuperscript{th} 9:00 – 11:00 (PD) (ID) (MC) 11:00 - 1:00 (PD) (ID) (MC)  
1:00 - 3:00 (PD) (ID) (MC) 3:00 – 5:00 (PD) (ID) (MC)

Sun., March 10\textsuperscript{th} 9:00 – 12:00 (PD) (ID) (MC) 12:00 – 2:00 (PD) (ID) (MC)  
2:00 – 4:00 (PD) (ID) (MC)

( ) These are the only times I can work

( ) I can fill in where needed.

Your timely return of this form is greatly appreciated.

Please return **BY MAIL Or In PERSON** no later than **February 21\textsuperscript{st}** to:

Extension Office, 383 Collins Rd. NE Cedar Rapids

Thanks again for all that you do!
Coordinator's Comments  
*By Elizabeth Ward*

Despite the record low temperatures and frozen ground outside, the Linn County Master Gardener Program continues to adapt to changing conditions and, ultimately, grow and flourish as we make our way into February 2014. I am impressed each week by the resiliency and depth of commitment that Linn County Master Gardeners have infused into the program.

Winter Gardening Fair preparations are in full-swing and the committee and supporting cast has done an amazing job at putting together all of the pieces of the puzzle. A large event like Winter Gardening Fair truly has the potential to bring us together – sometimes even into the wee hours of the night! This is also a busy month as we gear-up for the growing season and many more educational events, including the library talks, Expert Ed. presentations, the WMT Garden Show and the Creative Gardening Series.

For those of you who I have not yet had the opportunity to work with, I hope to do so soon!

A little about me: My background is in community education with topics including composting, rainwater harvesting, gardening, and natural resources protection. I am an enthusiastic composter and sacrificed some furniture to make sure my worm bin made the trip here from San Diego! I hail from an acreage outside of Dubuque. In my spare time I enjoy backpacking, native habitat restoration, cooking, traveling, and of course, gardening!

I hope that 2014 brings great things for you and your families as well as the Linn County Master Gardener program!

Elizabeth Ward  
eward@iastate.edu

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**Master Gardener Stipend Funds Available**  
*By Mike Anderson*

There are still funds available this year (through June 2014) to pay registration costs for Master Gardeners who wish to attend MG approved events. MG's must have completed their internship, be MG's in good standing, and must have shown a commitment to the MG program to apply. Check the Germinator for "educational opportunities" for more information on approved events. Events that qualify for stipends are marked with the MG logo. If you are interested in receiving a stipend for registration costs for an event, contact Elizabeth Ward.
A new project is coming to the Noelridge Gardens in 2014 that will give additional volunteer opportunities to Master Gardeners. It should be a fun, exciting year!

Kristie Benzine, Noelridge Head Gardener, is pleased to announce a new and creative development of the Noelridge All America Selections Garden in conjunction with the Blue Zones Project. In order to provide a new opportunity for people to enjoy the Noelridge beds while learning about our environment and nature, a butterfly garden and vegetable garden will be planted and maintained beginning in 2014 and continuing thereafter.

Becki Lynch, Noelridge volunteer, is heading up the effort to bring this garden to the public, and Linn County Master Gardeners will hold open informational seminars during the growing season. There will be information on All America Selections plants, native plants, and the butterflies that visit. Master Gardeners will also be on hand to answer all questions and provide information on a variety of herbs grown at their herb garden at Noelridge.

A unique and exciting aspect of this garden will be the willow artwork of Lindsay Lee and Mary Kopecky. Lindsay is a well-known willow artist and owner of Willowglen Nursery with his wife, Lee Zieke. He is generously donating his work because he has fond personal memories of Noelridge Park. Mary is a local willow artist, volunteer and student of Lindsay. Mary will be on hand at the seminars to talk about the artwork and techniques of weaving willow.

Opportunities to become involved will be posted through the Extension Office as we get nearer to the event, but here are a few possibilities:

March 22 (Sat): Willow Flutes Construction
Week of March 24: Collect Willow Weavers?
April 20: Easter Sunday—Display
April 26 or 27 (Sat or Sun): Willow Workshop
May 11 (Sun): Mother’s Day—Display
May 13, 14, 15: Prepare Beds for Planting
May 20, 21, 22: Planting AAS Butterfly and Vegetable Beds—Goodwill Clients
July 9 (Wed): Municipal Band Concert/Farmer’s Market—Plant Instruction
August 21 (Thurs): Jazz Under the Stars—Vegetable, Flower and Herb Instruction
September 7 (Sun): Fall Flower Show—Butterfly, Plant, Vegetable, and Herb Instruction
Plants Help Us Work Better, Reduce Stress
By Jean Murray

As Master Gardeners, we always have known that plants improve our lives. Now, some new studies show that plants can help us reduce stress, think better, and be more productive.

We know that plants in a room can increase oxygen levels and the lovely greens and blooms of plants make our homes more pleasant. But plants can also improve our workplaces and reduce stress levels.

Research teams from Norway and America studied plants in the workplace and found that they provided not only aesthetic and visual benefits, but they also improved worker concentration and productivity.

The Norwegian team conducted two studies that measured attention to task on a computer screen. In both studies, participants performed the task either at a basic wooden desk with nothing around it or at the same desk surrounded by office flowers and foliage. "The results were overwhelming – those surrounded by plants did much better than those who were not."

A computer lab at Washington State University was the site of another study. Subjects asked to participate in an experiment to measure stress levels in people using computers. Subjects were randomly assigned to be tested in the computer lab when plants were absent or when they were present.

Interior plants, when present, were placed around the sides of the room. Subjects' blood pressure and emotions were monitored while they performed a slightly stressful computer task that measured reaction times in response to seeing and decoding the shape of a simple object on the screen.

When plants were added to the lab, the subjects were more productive (12% quicker reactions on the computer task) and less stressed (systolic blood pressure lower). They also reported feeling more attentive when the plants were present.

Surprised? I'm not.

Sources:
http://public.wsu.edu/~lohr/hih/productivity/
February Library Classes Scheduled

Hiawatha Library: Mondays from 6:30 – 7:30

February 3: *Ponds and Water Features*—Larry Dawson. Ponds don’t have to cost a lot to set up and maintain. Larry will teach you how to build an economical pond, waterfall, and other water features.

February 10: *Plants Deeply Rooted in History*—Judy Stevens. Curious about the important influence plants have had on shaping history and in our lives today? Judy will illuminate the journey of historical plants throughout the ages from the early Greek Olympics and America’s Wild West to the present time.

February 24: *Straw Bale Gardening*—Melanie Brown/Barb Wing. Learn the history of straw bale gardening, practiced methods throughout the ages, and how to create your own straw bale garden that boasts high yields with no weeds. Straw bale gardening is a recyclable container garden solution for vegetables, plants and flowers suitable for problem areas.

Ely Library: Thursdays from 6:30 – 7:30

February 6: *Iowa’s Gardens – More than Just Pretty Places*—Jean Murray. Take a tour of some great Iowa gardens, from wildlife prairies to formal gardens, small to large, indoor and out. Jean shares some tips and discusses what you can learn from a garden visit.

February 13: *Plant This Year for Next Winter Interest*—Deb Walser. Plant for winter interest even when there is snow on the ground. Shrubs and trees with striking barks and branches will be featured. Imagine looking out the window at the bumps in the snow allowing us expectations of spring.

February 20: *Colorful Cottage Gardens*—Debbie Main. Embrace those plants that love to move around! Debbie will guide you through a brief history of the cottage garden and also share plant and element ideas that bring riots of color and coziness to your home’s garden year round.

February 27: *Heavenly Hydrangeas*—Wil Carew. Hydrangeas bloom in a variety of colors including white, blue, pink, green and red. Join Wil as he discusses the how-to’s of planting and pruning. He also shares those varieties which are his locally available personal ‘celestial’ favorites.

Upcoming Expert Ed Classes

To register, contact Linn County Extension by calling (319) 377-9839 or by emailing eward@iastate.edu. Events are open to MG and the public and held at the Linn County Extension Office.

February 1; 1:00 PM: Efficient Irrigation. Mike Baron, an irrigation expert with the Toro Company will be speaking on *Efficient Home Landscape Irrigation* (Webinar archived last September.)

March 1; 1:00 PM: Kerry Culp from ISU will be presenting *Soil fertility analysis for residential horticulture...simplified.* Kerry’s goal is to help people understand that if they want their money’s worth, there needs to be effort put into actually taking the sample(s); that the analysis will be accurate, but the interpretation is only as accurate as the sampling technique.
Lowe Park Greenhouse Update

By Phil Pfister

I have heard that we haven’t had a winter with low temperatures and winds like this for 20 years, and up until this year, we have easily heated the greenhouse with the two heaters that were part of the package we purchased. But, in December, when the temperatures dropped below zero, it became apparent that supplemental heat was needed. So we borrowed a salamander style heater which was working fine until the night of January 5. That night the heater failed and we had a hard freeze in the greenhouse. The morning of January 6, the water pipes were frozen solid, and so was the soil in most of the pots. We lost a lot of our cutting stock that is used for From the Ground Up and the Plant Sale. Surprisingly, not everything succumbed to the cold temperatures, so we are still in operation. We just don’t have as many plants, and we’ll have to wait for some of them to recover before we can start propagation again.

So how do we prevent this from happening again? The first thing we did was borrow a different heater from neighbor, Dean Zachmeyer. This one is newer and a little more high-tech, and will hopefully supplement our heaters for the duration of these cold spells. For a long term solution we have requested a quote for a greenhouse heat/shade blanket. The system is advertised to reduce heating costs by up to 30%. It ties into the Step-up Controller, so it’s operated by the same computer that controls the heaters, fans, shutters and vents. We are also getting quotes on installing a third LP heater that would provide extra heating capacity when the existing heaters can’t keep up. The third heater should be a fairly low cost solution. The blanket is a more costly investment, but we should be able to install it ourselves and save the installation costs. More next month after we have the numbers.

On a happier note, Lead Grower, Shelby Foley and I would like to welcome the following volunteers to the Lead and Lead Assistant Team: Barb Brown, Julie Gibson, Joanne Happ, Darrell Hennessay, Danielle Herring, Vicki Keegan, Colleen Kint, Sam Krumholz, Fran Potratz, Sharon Reilly, Pam Scott, and Rosanne Van Cura. These Master Gardeners join our existing team: Pam Brackey, Steve Bartlett, Lynda Bordwell, Devon Dietz, Tim Gilbertson, Doug Smith, and Shirley Thornton. Karen Hacke has been part of the Lead Team, but is stepping down. We thank Karen for all she has done over the past three growing seasons.

Reminder to all Linn County Master Gardeners…

Please make sure to complete your final 2013 Linn County Master Gardener Service Record Form with your volunteer/educational hours and submit to Elizabeth Ward at eward@iastate.edu. You may also drop your form off at the Linn County Extension Office.
January 2014 Steering Committee—Draft

(Abridged for Germinator; Committees not listed had no report)


Guests: Elizabeth Ward

Approval of Minutes: December minutes amended to include S. Usher as present. Minutes unanimously approved as amended.

Announcements: Joan West has resigned. Beula Dvorak was welcomed as our newest member. Iowa open meeting law was visited. The purpose and responsibilities of the Steering Committee were discussed.

Financial Report: Financial report was presented by Jean Murray.

Committee Reports:

NewBo: It turns out Alliant Energy did give the Learning Garden a $2,500 gift back in August; that information simply never filtered down to Staff member Wendy Zimmerman or myself. This means that we will be getting a sign manufactured for the site (acknowledging the MG partnership). Wendy Zimmerman will be leaving her position as market manager in January so we are in flux as to our Market staff point person.

Expert Ed:

January 18 at 1 PM: Moisture Extremes in the Landscape Summer Webinar Series. Dr. Jeff Iles will be presenting on Diagnosing Drought Damage, Flood Damage, and Other Abiotic Stress Injury on Landscape Trees and Shrubs.

February 1 at 1 PM: Efficient Irrigation. Mike Baron, an irrigation expert with the Toro Company will be speaking on Efficient Home Landscape Irrigation.

March 1 at 1 PM: Kerry Culp from Iowa State University will be presenting a program at the Extension Office about Soil Testing and Results.

Financial Planning: At a meeting with Extension Director, Diane Hagarty, on December 13, (Beth Roof and Jean Murray) it was agreed that the MG Program will set aside 25% of revenues for Extension overhead used by the program. For budget purposes, this means that expenses cannot be more than 75% of revenue.

The budget process will begin in January, with committee reports due Friday, January 24. The Finance Committee will meet the last week in January to set a budget to be presented at the February Steering Committee meeting.

From the Ground Up: From the Ground Up has a committee that is revamping the curriculum in order to fit in with requirements from the Cedar Rapids Schools. We hope to have it finished by the end of the school year, so we can introduce it to our FGU volunteers. Some of our current lead teachers are going to be trying out some of the new material this spring.
Greenhouse: Propagation and long growing season plant seeding starts in January.

Heritage Project: Two new co-chairs, Beckey Woodard Cole and Marti Garrison, for this project.

Hortline: Training is set up for Hortline Volunteers (new members and those who didn't take training last May): January 14 (1:00-3:00 pm) and January 16 (6:00-8:00 pm). Training both days will be in the Extension Office large conference room.

School Projects: Hiawatha: The Hiawatha School Garden is all tucked in for the winter, but we are exploring funding for the upcoming season, including applying for a grant from HyVee again.

Winter Gardening Fair: The Winter Gardening Fair brochures have been mailed and distributed widely in the region. Additional publicity and registration has begun (95 registrants on Day One!) and volunteers are sending in their forms. The committee will meet one last time prior to the event on January 16 at 1:00. At this meeting, a variety of details will be examined and plans finalized.

WMT: The WMT Committee met December 18 to begin planning for the Lawn and Garden Show to be held at Hawkeye Downs on Saturday, March 8 (9:00 am—5:00 pm) and Sunday, March 9 (10:00 am—4:00 pm). We will be contacting MGs for volunteers to man the booth and for three to four speakers with a concentration on food production. We also hope to incorporate "Polly" into our display.

Old Business: Fund-raising guidelines committee (B. Brown) - update. No report as meeting was scheduled for January 8.

New Business: None

Meeting adjourned. Date of next meeting: February 4, 2014

Respectfully submitted: Louise Harn, Secretary

Want to contact a fellow Linn County Master Gardener or update your personal profile? http://mgquickfind.info/

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach
Linn County Extension Master Gardeners
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