

April 2016

Garden to Table

News from the Yard, Garden and Locally Grown

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In The News

Lyon County receives grant for 2016 pantry garden at ISU Demonstration Garden-Rock Rapids

Lyon County Extension and Outreach was recently awarded one of Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach's Master Gardener grants with the primary focus of increasing access to healthy foods for families experiencing poverty.

Throughout Iowa, 25 grants were awarded totaling \$20,000 with the funding coming from the United States Department of Agriculture's SNAP-Ed program.

"We applied for just over \$900 to be used to help us track pounds of garden produce grown and distributed to local food pantries," Margaret Murphy, ISU Extension and Outreach Horticulture Educator, said. "We were very excited to learn that we were awarded \$915 to do this."

Rock Rapids is home to one of ISU Extension and Outreach's seven demonstration gardens that are taking part in the challenge of growing a pantry garden this year. The produce grown will be donated to local food pantries throughout Lyon, O'Brien, Sioux and Osceola counties.

"If the garden produces like it has in past years, we will have plenty of produce to share with area food pantries," Murphy said. "We have already been in touch with several food pantries and look forward to donating fresh vegetables."

If you or an organization you belong to are interested in volunteering to help with harvest or distribution, please contact Murphy at 712-472-2576 or mmurphy@iastate.edu.

April 6, 2016 ISU Extension & Outreach press release



an assault of wet, late season snow. Plant in either full sun or partial shade.

Another happy find was the **striped squill**. The flower has blue stripes bisecting white petals. It has a spike form and reaches about six inches tall. The striped squill will readily multiply and, like the common snowdrop, will grow in full sun or partial shade.

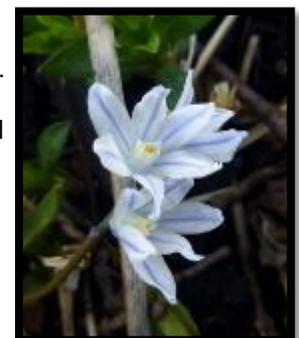
Other minor bulb members include the winter aconite, crocus and grape hyacinth. Minor bulbs are often planted en masse creating great visual impact.

I Spy ... early spring blooms

A few autumns ago, while planting some hardy bulbs I also included a couple of minor bulbs. Minor bulbs refer to a group of small-sized flowering bulbs that emerge very early in the spring. They often don't make it into one's landscape and this is unfortunate since plants in this group not only offer early season color but provide some very handsome though petite flowers. Many naturalize well and can be long-lived with minimal care.

While cleaning up one of my flower beds, I noticed the **common snowdrop**.

The first flower to emerge in my garden. Reaching only about four inches or so, it begins to peek its head out of the soil in late winter or very early spring. It has a dainty, white flower that bows down making it a bit secretive. It is easy to grow and can withstand



April

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Tis the season to begin planting...		 <p>The Garden Pea</p>			<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Start tomato, pepper & eggplant indoors</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Time to start fertilizing your houseplants</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p> <p>When soil's ready to be worked, plant peas, lettuce, spinach, beets, carrots</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Time for lawn clean-up; check for crabgrass</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Plant potatoes in well-drained, fertile soil</p> 	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>  <p>The Delectable Garden Beet</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Divide perennials as new growth emerges</p>
<p>17</p> <p>Practice Integrated Pest Management</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Plant a tree or two or three...</p> 	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Earth Day</p> 	<p>23</p>
<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Start a compost</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Did you know.... maples are not the only trees to have their sap flow in the spring? Birch, hickory & walnut do to and are used for syrup product...</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Try a new vegetable in the garden or in a meal!</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Arbor Day</p> 	<p>30</p>
<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Growing carrots and other root vegetables</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Don't forget to plan and plant an herb garden for fresh herbs this summer</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>



Master Gardener News

- Upcoming Master Gardener core training has 31 sites offering to host including Osceola County at the Osceola Community Hospital in Sibley. Registration is open. Please apply [online](#).
- The Iowa Master Gardener website is being converted to Drupal format, which is mobile friendly.
- The Iowa Master Gardener newsletter is a Constant Contact **ALL STAR**. It is in their top 10% of newsletters being opened! Click [here](#) to sign-up to receive it or look at previous issues.

Volunteer Service Opportunities

Volunteers are needed throughout growing season at the ISU Demonstration Garden in Rock Rapids

- We will be keeping records of what is donated this summer to area pantries
- Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering to help
 - Will we need help harvesting, washing, sorting marketable from not marketable, counting, weighing and distributing to food pantries in Lyon, Sioux, Osceola and O'Brien counties
 - We have some funding to help reimburse mileage for food pantry distributions outside of Rock Rapids
- Write something for the Garden to Table newsletter
- Help with local Master Gardener Facebook page, [SOLO Master Gardener](#) (Sioux, O'Brien, Lyon, Osceola)
- Accompany horticulture educator on site visits to address yard and garden questions
- Participate in 'Ask a Master Gardener' - set a time to answer gardening question at the ISU Demonstration Garden in Lyon County or at a farmers' market
- Assist with answering yard and garden questions at county extension office

Please send me photos of your garden(s) or your Master Gardener activities
We love to share!

Continuing Education

Two upcoming Master Gardener Conference:

- Upper Midwest Master Gardener Conference will be September 14-17, 2016 in scenic Wisconsin Dells. The theme is "Helping Nature Thrive," and will feature area garden tours, educational sessions, expert speakers, and the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association annual meeting and ice cream social. Visit the [conference website](#) for more information.
- The 2017 International Master Gardener Conference will be July 10-14, 2017 in Portland Oregon. Please visit the [conference website](#) for more information.



Articles for the Yard, Garden & Local Fare

It's Time to Plant Those Healthy Greens

Did your mother ever tell you to eat your greens? Greens are delicious and loaded with nutrients important to good health. They include collards, mustard greens, kale, spinach, Swiss chard, turnip greens and beet tops.

Greens are a dietary staple in many countries though consumption in our country has declined in favor of other, more popular vegetables. Few of us probably eat the amount of dark green vegetables recommended by the USDA's MyPlate, which is about 1.5-2 cups per week for adults. If you'd like to add more greens to your diet, you're in luck because greens are very easy to grow and perfect to plant in the cool months of spring. You can direct seed them in the garden as soon as the soil can be worked.

Most greens prefer cool weather. Kale and collards tolerate warmer temperatures but mustard greens and spinach will bolt quickly in the summer heat. Chard, on the other hand, will yield leaves throughout the summer. To enjoy a fall crop of greens sow some collard, mustard and kale seeds in midsummer. Spinach can be planted in early August for a second crop.

If you are cramped for space, greens can also be grown in containers. The size of the container will vary by crop. For example, with beets and turnips use at least a two gallon container. A one gallon pot is fine for other greens. Thin seedlings to one plant every three inches. For chard, mustard, and collards sow two to three seeds and thin to a single plant.

You can harvest greens as soon as the leaves reach a usable size. Young leaves are milder tasting and except for collards can be eaten raw in salads. Collards are tough chewing and can taste bitter if eaten raw. Pick the outer leaves and let the plant keep growing. Store greens unwashed in an open plastic bag in the refrigerator. Storage life will vary by the type of green. For long term storage, freezing is the best option.

When preparing greens for cooking wash the leaves under cool running water or swish the greens around in a sink of cold water to remove any dirt. For large, mature leaves remove the stem and midrib by cutting them away with a sharp knife. Then stack the leaves on a cutting board, roll them into a jelly roll shape and slice into 1/2 to 1-inch wide strips.

An easy way to cook greens is to bring lightly salted water to boiling. Add the sliced greens, cover and cook until tender. I use a large cast iron skillet with just enough water to cover the greens. Chard and beet tops generally take 8 to 10 minutes to cook while kale, mustard, turnip, and collard greens take about 20 to 30 minutes. Keep in mind that young, tender leaves will cook faster than older leaves. Drain the greens,

toss in some butter or olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Or you can sprinkle them with ginger, curry, lemon juice or balsamic or cider vinegar. There are many ways to season cooked greens.

Though greens are most often boiled, sautéing them is another way to go. A traditional dish for collards is to sauté them with bacon and garlic.

Recipes will call for large amounts of greens but keep in mind that greens cook down considerably in the pan. You can find many recipes online and if looking through a cookbook, check the index under greens.



Garden Fun Facts: Potatoes

- Did you know that human use of potatoes dates back at least 7,000 years to the Andes Mountains in South America? The Incas revered potatoes and even buried potatoes with their dead.
- The Irish are probably best known for their love of potatoes and the blight that destroyed their potato crop.
- There are over 5,000 varieties of potatoes in the world. In the United States, one of the most common varieties is the red potato.
- Potatoes were once so valued for their vitamin C content that miners traded gold for potatoes. In fact, there is even a potato called Yukon Gold!
- A single medium-sized potato contains about half the daily requirement of vitamin C and provides complex carbohydrates needed to fuel our brains and bodies.

From the Master Gardener Desk

Thanks to Melonee Lentell, Master Gardener Intern, for this month's article

"So what do you want for your birthday?" was the question asked by my husband a few years back as we sat around the dinner table one night. I sat back and thought of the possibilities....a massage gift certificate, a new pair of running shoes, or maybe that cool print I'd been eyeing in the gift shop.

After several moments of pondering I leaned back in my chair and smiled. "Time. I'd like time." He looked at me a little puzzled. "How do you mean?"

"I'd like to spend the whole day in the yard and flower garden with no interruptions. No making lunch for the kids. No worrying about laundry or feeding the dog. I'd like to be left by myself in the yard all day."

His look went from perplexed to understanding. "I think we can arrange that," he said with a grin. So the following Saturday I got up, put on my gardening shoes, filled my mug to the brim with coffee and headed out to the yard with anticipation of spending the whole day there. I dug and divided irises and hostas. I weeded a flower bed that had been looking sad all summer and pruned and deadheaded the roses. It was a wonderful day that was truly a gift.

Now not everyone would think that was a gift. For some that would have seemed like work. They would rather have had the massage or the new pair of shoes but for me it was a time of stress relief and relaxation.

For some of us, getting our hands in dirt or pruning a tree brings us joy. Ripping out weeds and dividing clumps of coneflowers helps clear out the cobwebs in our brains. Yet others would rather cut out squares to make a quilt or tinker on the '76 Mustang in the garage. Spending the day at the beach or perusing through antique shops would be a great way to pass some bonus time. But for me that bonus time would be spent in the yard.

Which is why this Fall I finally broke down and signed up for the Master Gardeners class through the Iowa State Extension. I had wanted to for a very long time but with the kids' busy schedules it just hadn't been feasible. I was also a little nervous....could my 39 year old brain still read a book to learn something new? After spending years changing diapers and making boxes of macaroni and cheese, could I retain information to help others with gardening questions when they arose?



The answer would be a resounding YES!!! With a couple other gals, we made the trek up to Rock Rapids one or two night a week for approximately two months learning everything from lawn management and house plants

to pest control and weed identification. Some nights were more interesting than others but I can say that the course was extremely well rounded in learning something about anything that can happen in a person's yard or garden. We also were required to spend a day down in Ames on the ISU campus for classes that added to our knowledge. It was a wonderful day spent with people who all love getting their hands dirty. And so now as I contribute this article and hopefully many more in the near future, I am fulfilling my last part on acquiring my title of "Master Gardener", my 40

hours of volunteer time. This time is to be educationally based. We as master gardeners are to be the hands and feet of the Iowa State Extension Offices across the state of Iowa. They have poured into us knowledge and therefore we are to return the favor by helping others with their gardening questions.

So send me your emails, text a question, or make a call to either me or your county extension. We'd be happy to help answer questions from why your hydrangeas are no longer blooming, what that funky insect is all over your kale plants, how to prune your apple tree, or maybe when is the best time to fertilize your yard. Any question is a good one. You can learn at any age. Take it from a soon-to-be 40 year old!!

Become a Master Gardener

- 2016 Core Training will be at the Osceola Community Hospital in Sibley beginning September 20
- Apply online at the [Iowa Master Gardener website](#)
- Trainee: Take 40 hours of horticulture training
- Intern: Training completed now need to complete 40 hours of volunteer service
- Certified Master Gardener: Internship hours completed, need to do 20 hours volunteer service & 10 hours of continuing education annually to remain certified

Save the Date!

Upcoming Events

Spring

Friday April 22 Earth Day!

Start a Compost

Friday April 29 Arbor Day!

Plant a tree!

May

ISU Demonstration Garden gets planted (date to be determined).

Early Summer

Saturday June 11

Garden to Table Series: Vegetable Gardening for Small Spaces: We will establish a small space garden at the ISU demonstration garden in Rock Rapids to show how to grow vegetables when space is limited. The garden will include a raised bed, a container garden plus, garden trellises. We'll also explore how to use inter-planting & succession techniques. From 9:30am-noon. Free & open to the public. Click [here to download a flyer](#).

Summer

Garden to Table Series also includes:

- **Monday July 25 Gardening with Herbs** at the O'Brien County Fair from 2pm-3pm. Learn how to grow herbs in the garden or in containers, companion planting with herbs, grow herbs indoors through the winter. Free & open to the public. [Click here to download a flyer](#).
- **Tuesday August 9 Cooking with Garden Vegetables** with nutrition & wellness specialist, Renee Sweers. A hands-on cooking class featuring tips on how to prepare easy, nutritious meals using fresh garden fare. Time: 6pm-8pm at the Forster Community Center, Rock Rapids. Free but pre-registration required. [Click here to download a flyer](#).
- **Thursday August 11 Cooking with Herbs** with Renee Sweers. Join a hands-on cooking class featuring easy cooking tips and recipes using fresh herbs at the Sutherland Fire Rescue and Ambulance building from 6pm-8pm. Cost: \$15/person. [Click here to download a flyer](#).

Let me know if you have an upcoming event or activity that you'd like posted!

Pest of the Month

Crabgrass

Spring is the time to thwart crabgrass from taking hold in your lawn. Crabgrass is an annual grass that germinates from spring to mid-summer. The seeds begin to germinate when soil temperatures reach 55 to 60 degrees F. A pre-emergent herbicide can be used to prevent the growing of crabgrass.

For successful crabgrass control, timing is everything. Pre-emergent herbicides should be applied when soil temps (at a 2 inch depth) are about 55 degrees F. Typically, when you see the bright yellow flowers of forsythia or start to smell the lilacs in bloom.

You can check with a garden center or nursery for commonly used herbicides and always read and follow the instructions carefully.

Avoid applying pre-emergent herbicides in areas you are trying to reseed. These chemicals will inhibit the growth of the grass seed. Apply the pre-emergent well after the grass seed has sprouted.



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For questions, comments or to contribute an article or photo

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