Steve Evans became a Master Gardener Intern in the fall of 2013. He is the first Marion County Master Gardener who also belongs to and is active in the Central Iowa Garden Railroad Society. Garden railroading, a century-old hobby that combines model trains with the outdoors, is one of the fastest growing family leisure pastimes. Through it, one can see fascinating train layouts and gardens while experiencing the unique sights, smells, sounds, and the excitement of the "large scale" world of model trains. Garden train engines are about the size of a large loaf of bread and look just like the real trains.

The Central Iowa Garden Railway Society has regular monthly meeting at which they discuss members’ current projects, hobby news and the latest products on the market. A program is presented at each meeting, either by one of the members, or by someone brought from outside the organization. The programs generally cover some element of the hobby; for example, the history of local and other railroads, rolling stock, track work, and miniature gardening. The business end of the meeting is usually kept to a minimum.

The club encompasses all facets of this fascinating hobby, and includes electric operation, battery-powered equipment, and trains that actually run on live steam. Most of the members have, or hope to have G gauge or Gauge 1 railroads in their gardens, backyards or basements.

On June 28th the club will hold its Central Iowa Garden Railroad Tour in Des Moines and surrounding area garden train locations. For information contact Kidman Tree Farm @ www.kidmanfarms.com or www.cigrs.net. The event will be held from 9:00 am—4 pm. Cost is $5 per car.
**Upcoming Events**

**April 12** – Knoxville Federated Garden Club’s Annual Garden Gala., Knoxville Fairgrounds, Knoxville, IA. Speakers include Eve Vanden Broek (*Backyard Bees*), Kris Jurik (*All About Peonies*), and Nathan Brockman (*Butterflies and More*). This event is sold out for 2014.

**April 26** – Marion County Extension’s Spring Workshop Series; Marion County Extension Office, 10:30 am; *Hypertufa Pots* workshop. $15 material fee; class size limited; pre-registration suggested.

**May 31** – Marion County Extension’s Spring Workshop Series; Marion County Extension Office, 10:30 am; *Vertical Gardening* workshop. $15 material fee; class size limited; pre-registration suggested.

June 28 — Central Iowa Garden Railroad Tour, Des Moines & surrounding area garden train locations. For information contact Kidman Tree Farm @ www.kidmanfarms.com or www.cigrs.net. 9:00 am—4 pm. $5 per car.


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**Time for Spring Clean-Up**

- Start spring cleanup. Take advantage of this month’s occasional pleasant days to rake and pick up trash and broken limbs. Cut back ornamental grasses and any dead tops of perennials.
- Be careful about working soil in your garden if it’s wet. Spading wet soil will make it dry in large hard clumps and ruin the texture of the soil.
- Begin planting trees and shrubs. Plant bare root trees, shrubs and small fruits as soon as the ground is workable. March to early April planting will start the plants “rooting in” before bud break.
- Set out pansies as soon as the ground or container is ready. They will flower continuously if the blossoms are kept picked.
- If you need help with a landscape design, do it now before the garden centers are overwhelmed with big crowds and nice weather. Early planning will get you in the garden on the first sunny day.
- Take a soil test for your lawn and/or garden so that you may add lime if needed and any other missing nutrients before the growing season. The Extension Office stocks soil test kits and can help you interpret the results from Iowa State University.
- Apply a crabgrass preventer and feed to your lawn at the end of the month. It’s also a good time to aerate your lawn, especially if it’s newly laid sod.

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“The Green Scene” is a tip sheet developed by the Marion County Extension Office to inform people of horticulture events, problems, and interesting ideas. Let us know if you want to be added to our mailing list. Some issues are also available at [www.extension.iastate.edu/marion/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/marion/). This material has been prepared Karen Askley, Agriculture Program Assistant and Master Gardener Coordinator. If you have questions, please contact the office at (641) 842-2014.

Sincerely, **Dale R. Miller**, County Extension Program Director