

March 20, 2020

Dear Master Gardener Coordinators and Volunteers:

At this unprecedented time in our history I want to communicate directly with you about what Extension and Outreach is doing to comply with the Governor's Public Health Disaster Emergency and Iowa State University plan to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Our highest priority is the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and program participants. We have cancelled, postponed or put online all face-to-face meetings through May 9th. All ISU employees are working remotely wherever possible and taking extra steps to practice social distancing. County Extension staff are doing the same and while staff may be in the office at times, they have either closed offices to the public or reduced hours. I do not know how long the work remotely order will continue. We will look to public health officials for further direction.

The Master Gardener program is an important part of ISU Extension and Outreach and we very much value your important contributions to your communities. For the health and safety of Master Gardener volunteers and your communities I request the following.

1. Meetings & Events

- a. All in-person meetings & events are to be cancelled through May 9th (with a possible extension)
- b. Individuals 65 and older should avoid contact with other people (CDC).
- c. You may want to host workshops and MG meetings online. Please work with your MG county coordinator to set this up.

2. Volunteer Projects

- a. As you consider whether to maintain a Master Gardener volunteer garden site, please consider the safety of the MG volunteers, Extension staff and the public. In some cases, some projects won't happen or will be scaled back this year. This is a good time to consider focusing on fewer projects that are done well.
- b. All projects must follow guidelines based on recommendations from the CDC:
 - i. Keep the number of volunteers working in the garden to a minimum (less than 10 people)
 - ii. Ensure social distancing and practice frequent hand-washing. Stay home if you are sick.
 - iii. Use approved cleaners for shared surfaces, such as tools, hose spigots, or hose handles.

3. Number of MG Volunteer Hours

- a. Iowa MG volunteers are asked to log 20 volunteer hours each calendar year. Please work with your MG county coordinators to find ways to participate in MG volunteer hours in a less hands-on fashion (e.g. Hosting a remote plant helpline, Writing newspaper articles or contributing to social media, Participating in MG online meetings)

- b. MG interns who are working on completing 40 volunteer hours by December 31, 2020 may ask for an extension.
- c. If you or a family member becomes ill and you cannot volunteer this year, please send a message to your MG county coordinator

Thank you for all that you do to help homeowners, provide fresh fruits and vegetables for families in need and make our communities more pleasant and enjoyable. You and your volunteer work is important to us all. Please be safe and we will get through this public health crisis together. To see updates from ISU Extension and Outreach related to COVID-19, visit my [website](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John D. Lawrence".

John D. Lawrence
Vice President for Extension and Outreach