What’s in this February newsletter...

- Dedication to Emma Mae Pruitt and Rick Crooks
- News from Education Coordinator
- Picturesque winter tour of Arboretum
- Is a Monochromatic Garden for You
- Garden Soils or Potting Mixes for your Home
- Preparing for Spring Planting
- Eating Colorful Vegetables
- Call for Support: Muscatine Zoo Garden Project
- Gardening Crossword
- Valentines Note and Announcements
News from Education Coordinator
Thank You — Carolyn Lemaster

Iowa State University Master Gardener News

See the full list of upcoming events here: https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/events

Upcoming horticulture meetings and workshops here: https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/2021/01/upcoming-horticulture-meetings-and-workshops

Growing Great Vegetables -
University of Illinois Extension
Sessions: 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays from January 26 to March 9

Whether growers have several acres or a patio with room for a few containers, now is the time to start planning for a successful garden. This seven-week webinar series, for new or experienced gardeners, will cover the basics of starting a vegetable garden from start to finish led by University of Illinois Extension horticulture experts.

65th Iowa State University Shade Tree Short Course –
Virtual Conference
Monday, February 22 – Friday, February 26

Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook page
Have you “Liked” this page? Frequent posts are included about timely gardening topics.

International Master Gardener
Conference 2021
September 12-17, 2021
This event will be virtual! Read more here.
Emma Mae Pruitt passed away after a long illness, on January 24. For those who would like to send a card to Lynn, the address is:

606 Broadway
Nichols, Iowa 52766

Emma Mae and Lynn have been very active in MG group. They were newsletter editors and hosted garden tours at their home, as well as organizers for the Art of Gardening conference and MG Board members. Emma Mae will be greatly missed.

The February 2021 newsletter is dedicated to two wonderful Muscatine Master Gardeners that left us too soon.

Rick Crooks a fellow Master Gardener passed away in January 2021 month. He will surely be missed!

Sympathy cards and remembrances can be sent to:

Marcia Crooks
5 Coventry Lane #4,
Muscatine, Iowa 52761
Happy Valentines Day!
by Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair

Can’t you just hear John Legend singing this?

'Cause all of me.....Loves all of you
Love your curves and all your edges
All your perfect imperfections

Give your all to me....I'll give my all to you
You're my end and my beginnin'
Even when I lose, I'm winnin' hope
'Cause I give you all of me ...._And you give me all of you!

How perfect is that thought and how spe-
cial to know love like this!! I hope you can share love with someone special this Valentine’s Day be it your spouse, your grandchild, a good friend or a special neighbor.

And maybe you can google All of Me and enjoy John Legend as he sings this special song to you!

Throughout this newsletter there are several winter photos of the Muscatine Arboretum captured by:

Kathy Haltmeyer, Master Gardener

Have a great February!!
If You Can Will You? Is a Monochromatic Garden for You?

Contributed by Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair

Monochromatic gardens make use of a single color to create a visually appealing display. A single color garden design is anything but boring if done well. Variations in shades and textures keep this garden interesting. Let’s learn more about creating a monochromatic color garden.

Tips for a Single Color Garden Design

When creating a monochromatic color garden, use many different shades of your chosen color. For example, purple gardens can include everything from pale lavender to a purple so deep that it is almost black. Yellow color schemes for gardens can range from pale, buttery-colored flowers to deep gold. Before choosing your color, decide whether warm or cool colors will work best in your landscape. Cool colors have a calming effect and make the garden look larger by appearing as though they are seen at a distance. Cool colors include blue, violet and white. Warm colors, such as orange, red and yellow, create a feeling of excitement and make the garden appear smaller. Gardening with one color gives those who visit the garden a feeling of calm serenity. Instead of jumping from one contrasting color to the next, the eye lingers on each flower, picking out each blossom’s details.

Form and texture take on a more important role in a monochromatic garden. Include light, fluffy flowers as well as stiff spikes. Simple, daisy-like blossoms are sure to bring a smile when tucked among more complicated forms. Consider the texture of your foliage as well. Small, finely cut leaves have a light, airy appeal. Large, leathery leaves add structure and a sense of solidity. While variety spices up monochromatic gardens, large drifts of a single flower can be breathtaking. Spring bulbs are particularly well-suited to single-color drifts that command the viewer’s attention. Drifts, or mass plantings, are most effective when seen at a distance.
If You Can Will You? Is a Monochromatic Garden for You? ... Continued

Contributed by Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair

Color schemes for gardens should also take into account the color of the foliage. Pale foliage with hints of yellow or yellow variegation, for instance, look terrific with dark blue or purple flowers. Variegation is an excellent tool for adding variety and color, but be careful. Too much variegation can look hectic and busy. Another thing to consider when creating your garden is the bloom time. Most perennials have a limited bloom period. Plan to have centers of interest throughout the season. If you have colorless spots despite your plans, fill them in with annuals. Most annuals have a long bloom season and they are inexpensive and readily available throughout the year. They’ll begin blooming soon after you plant them; and when they are through, you can simply dig them up and replace them. Color Schemes for Gardens Gardening with one color is a great way to add unique interest to your landscape, especially when you practice the tips above in your single color garden design.

The following is a list of popular color schemes for gardens of one color:

Purple: lavender, violet, and deep purple flowers
Red: various pink tones, maroon, burgundy, red, and red-orange
Yellow: pale, buttery-colored flowers to deep gold
Blue: blue and blue-violet to purple blooms, blue-green foliage
Black: deep red or purple to nearly black flowers/foliage with silver, gold, or bright colors
White: white flowers set off by silver foliage plants Pink: pale pink (nearly white) to deep rose colors Orange: pale peach to fiery orange blooms
Green: green, grayish-green, and blue-green to purple or yellow-green

“All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn’t hurt.”

– Charles M. Schulz

Kathy Halmeyer, Master Gardener
Everyone uses either potting mixes or bags of garden soils, bagged or in bulk. This article is to provide some information on what goes in the potting mix, bags of soil or composts that gardeners buy.

There are many types of bagged potting mixes and garden soils available. Some are intended to be used in the ground to supplement or fill areas for gardens. Other products are intended for plants growing in containers and pots, or to be used as fill for new plants. It is important to read the label before purchasing these to learn the contents so they can be used correctly for the product.

Potting mixes intended for plants in containers and pots retain moisture, provide air space for roots, and are free from weed seeds, insects and diseases. Potting mixes, also called soilless mixes, usually contain combinations of peat moss, pine bark, coir, perlite and vermiculite. Some composts are also intended for container use.

These are components of potting mix for pots and containers:

Peat moss is a plant harvested primarily from American or Canadian peat bogs and some bogs in the northern United States. Canadian peat is more acidic. Peat moss decomposes very slowly, retains moisture in the potting mix while providing a balance of air space and water for healthy growing roots. Peat is acidic (low pH) and limestone is usually added to the mix to neutralize the acidic reaction and bal-

Garden soil contains minerals and organic matter. Mineral-based soils alone are not recommended for container plants because in containers, soil becomes very compacted and saturated with water, limiting air space, which is necessary for plant roots. Unpasteurized soil is a source for weeds, insect larva and potential disease organisms.
ance the pH. Peat moss often makes up 30-80% of potting mixes. Peat moss by itself is difficult to wet, so wetting agents are usually added to the mix to make it wet easier.

**Sphagnum peat moss** is the young or live portion of the plant. It is sold as green and living, or brown and dried, and is used for plants requiring moist growing mediums while providing good aeration. It is often dried and milled in seed starting mixes. We like this type of peat moss compared to other peat mosses.

**Bark products** are ground and/or partially composted by-products of the timber industry. This is usually a less expensive alternative to peat moss. Bark products have good aeration properties but they dry out quicker than peat moss. There are different properties associated with the specific types of bark. Barks should not be used in starting seedling because they immobilize nitrogen. Be very careful as you will find you need to fertilize more when bark is in the mix.

**Composts** are sold for in-ground gardens and some for potting mixes. Composts may not be consistent from batch to batch and can be unpredictable in physical and chemical properties. When used in containers, some composts have high levels of nutrients and will burn plant roots and have low air porosity. In gardens, composts are best mixed with existing garden soil. Using your own compost is preferred as you know what is in the compost, where purchasing compost from landfills or other sources, it’s unknown what components exist in your purchase.

**Perlite** is small white irregular shaped, volcanic rock that was crushed and heated. The heating causes it to expand. It is non-toxic, sterile and odorless. Perlite is used to improve drainage and aeration.
Garden Soils or Potting Mixes for your Home… Continued
by Gretchen Nollman and William Koellner, Master Gardeners

Vermiculite is very light, greyish puffy substance that forms when mica chips are heated. It contains some potassium, magnesium and calcium that will slowly become available. It is used to increase moisture and nutrient retention in mixes since it can also hold onto fertilizer for a period of time - helping to keep nutrients around the roots of your plants instead of washing out the bottom of the pot. We prefer vermiculite to perlite.

Coir are reddish-brown fibers that are harvested from coconut husks, a by-product of coconut fiber industry. It is used in potting mixes for containers in place of peat moss. It does not hold water nor does it break down. “It is used as door mats.”

Styrofoam is sometimes used as an inexpensive substitute for perlite. Beads of Styrofoam are used to aerate potting mixes and serve as a space filler. Styrofoam is lightweight, float to the surface when watered and can blow away when pots dry out. Also, unlike perlite, Styrofoam will compact over time.

Fertilizer starter charge and continuous fertilizers. A starter fertilizer on the label indicates that there is a minimal amount of fertilizer in the potting mix. Most starters are gone from the potting soil after watering two to three times.

A continuous fertilizer (controlled-release, time-released or slow release) in the bag indicates fertilizer pods are incorporated with the mix. Pods are small and round and evenly distributed throughout the mix. The pods are water soluble fertilizer that is encased in a semi-permeable resin coating. When they come in contact with water, small amounts of nutrients are released into the soil for use by the plant over a period of time, usually several weeks. So, each time the soil is watered, the plants are
getting "automatically" fertilized. The rate of nutrient release for most of these fertilizers is regulated by temperature. The warmer the temperature the faster nutrients are released.

Look for the round fertilizer pods in the potting mix. Squeezing the pods can indicate if a fertilizer has been depleted. If the pods are empty, the fertilizer has been released. When the initial fertilizer has been depleted, re-apply controlled-release fertilizer or use water-soluble fertilizer to continue to fertilize plants.

Bagged potting mix containing slow release fertilizer must be stored dry. Again, check the label for the details. If the potting mix gets wet, the fertilizer in the potting mix can pre-release inside the bag and become concentrated which will potentially burn plant roots when used. Dry, bagged potting mix will be light and fluffy.

**Wetting agents** are chemical substances that increases the spreading and penetrating properties of water by lowering its surface tension. These are used in potting mixes to enable water to thoroughly wet the mix.

Always initially moisten a potting medium with luke-warm water before using to have uniform moisture throughout the container. Plants potted in dry medium and then watered will have inconsistent moisture levels in their root zones.

Some potting mixes contain moisture retaining polymer gels, crystals or chemicals that absorbs water. These help to reduce the need for watering over the growing season. A little extra care will be necessary to avoid over-watering when the temperatures are still cool since the soil will be slow to dry out. The moisture holding ability of the soil breaks down over the season, usually by mid to late summer. When hydrated, water retaining gels look like clear chunks of glass, but are soft to touch.
Garden Soils or Potting Mixes for your Home… Continued
by Gretchen Nollman and William Koellner, Master Gardeners

Some other thoughts regarding using potting mixes bags of compost or other products in your landscape or pots.

In landscapes, composts are best thoroughly mixed with existing garden soil.

Manure products are intended for use in-ground gardens but not intended for any containers. Manures contain a form of nitrogen that will burn plants in containers. Manure products should be dry and are best when mixed with soil at a rate of about one part manure to two parts soil. Many manure related products contain sand, which makes them heavy for use in containers.

Mulch is usually a raw wood product (bark, wood chunks, shredded wood, etc.). It is intended to be used on the surface of the soil to maintain soil moisture, prevent water from evaporating and suppress weeds. Wood products that are not composted take available nitrogen from the soil as they break down. Use mulch products on top of the soil in your garden and landscape where they are intended to be.

Things to watch out for when purchasing bagged soil and mixes. Does the bag feel heavy and compact or light and fluffy? Often, when a bag of garden soil or potting mix is very heavy, it is either water soaked or it contains too much sand.

If potting mix becomes soaked it can begin to break down in the bag, become compact, lose air space and result in poor roots and plant growth. Mixes that contain controlled fertilizer pods may pre-release fertilizer into the mix causing young plants to burn.
“Never love anyone who treats you like you’re ordinary.”

— Oscar Wilde

Kathy Haltmeyer, Master Gardener
Call for Support: The Zoo Garden!

By: Maryrose Peterschmidt, Master Gardeners

The fall of this year will mark fifteen years since the Zoo Garden project began.

The Zoo Garden Committee, consisting of Marci Stephens, Kathy Chalupa and myself have come up with some plans to make the gardens more vibrant and alive in 2021. We are asking for your support to make this happen.

Starting to come in. The projects that we need support to realize is the replacement of outdated kiosks, the addition of some educational story boards and more animal sculptures.

Will you help us keep the gardens alive and vibrant? Your support is necessary. A donation can be mailed to the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine, 104 West 2nd Street, Muscatine.

Since the pandemic we have been unable to do any fund raising. We have started a mail fundraiser to kick off the 2021 gardening season. Donations are

We are looking forward to a healthy and better gardening year for all. Please help us grow.
Barns and Garden Crossword

ACROSS
1. Princess's problem
2. Continental money
3. Dirty deposit
4. List ender (when too lazy to complete the list)
5. Southern stretch?
6. Place for 35-, 36-, 39-, and 59-Across through the first half of March 2014
7. 2008 documentary about the national debt, by the same person who directed "Wordplay"
8. Archeologist's find
9. Tower of London figure
10. Unit of measure
11. Unit of measure
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13. Unit of measure
14. Unit of measure
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58. "___ we meet again...
59. Gophers who cut down the nets on April 3, 2014
60. Distributed (with "out")
61. Acting sisters Judith and Dana
62. Wine: Prefix
63. Cabinet dept. concerned with power
64. Hands over
65. Storied NYC arena where Richard Pitino made his father proud on April 3, 2014
66. Many mainframe computers
67. Key part of "Rhapsody in Blue"
68. Like a wild animal
69. "___ we meet again...
70. Prefix with dollars or chemicals
71. Beyond the clouds
72. Amtrak's bullet train
73. Cabinet dept. concerned with schools
74. Ex or sub follower
75. "Jack," SDSU athlete
76. Just-hatched hooter
77. Tournament long shots
78. Sounded like a frog
79. Way to go
80. Family name at Indy
81. Sweethearts
82. Cinque doubled
83. Sgt. played by Silver (1955-59) and Martin (1996)
84. Change for a fin
85. Advice from Athletic Director Teague to Coach Pitino, perhaps
86. Atomic energy oversight agency
87. Toward the rear
88. Eavesdropper in the news: Abbrev
89. Lock, stock, and barrel
90. French soul
91. Serpentine shape
92. Dr.'s order?
93. Fruitcake component
94. EEC part
95. Zero to Nero
96. More glistening
97. Practices, as a trade
98. "In days ___ when knights were bold ..."
99. Like Dolly the sheep
100. Sea froth
101. German indefinite article
102. Photo finish
103. Still in contention
104. Sweeping need
105. Pals down under
106. Colorful terminology
107. Parker who played Boone and Crockett
108. TV's "Science Guy"

DOWN
1. Prefix with dollars or chemicals
2. Beyond the clouds
3. Amtrak's bullet train
4. Cabinet dept. concerned with schools
5. Ex or sub follower
6. "Jack," SDSU athlete
7. Just-hatched hooter
8. Tournament long shots
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36. Pals down under
37. Colorful terminology
38. Parker who played Boone and Crockett
39. TV's "Science Guy"
Increasingly Popular: Gardening!
by Erin Parks, Newsletter Co-Editor and Master Gardener Intern

With all the turbulence that occurred in 2020 and going into 2021, Master Gardeners Rejoice! The bug of gardening has been spreading across the US. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, in June 2020, there was an increase of 8.6% compared to the previous year in gardening purchases related to building material, nursery and garden equipment and overall purchase from garden centers and stores.

As the chart shows, the demand in 2020 was massive, and 2021 seems to be trending in the same direction. In January, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, based in Missouri, announced that it planned to close its website between January 15th to January 20th to catch up on orders due to unprecedented demand. The concern that is being expressed in the industry isn’t that there are seed shortages, it is more to do with shipping delays that may occur due to supply chain limitations. Meaning seed companies haven’t been able to process orders as fast as they are coming in.

As the spring season starts to peek
Increasingly Popular: Gardening! ... Continued
by Erin Parks, Newsletter Editor Intern

around the corner, several Master Gardeners are planning and preparing for the upcoming vegetable and flower garden season. I urge readers to be prepared and flexible as you start to order your supplies and seeds.

Here are five tips that you can follow as you navigate your 2021 Garden Season:

1. Plan Early, Order Early. With Shipping delays, allow for more time for the seeds and equipment to be shipped to your house.

2. When possible... order online. Specifically, for seeds, seed Catalogs are great for reading up on varieties but often, it takes longer to fill orders placed through old-fashioned mail-order catalogs.

3. Have backup options. When finalizing your plan, you may learn that the variety of flowers or plants may no longer be available. Have backups ready, so that you can fill your garden space.

4. Learn how to reuse equipment. To be good stewards of the land, it is always important to reuse any equipment you may have (as long as it is in working condition).

5. Start seed saving! If you haven’t mastered the art of seed saving, 2021 is a great year to learn how to extract seeds from plants you already own.
“Love is when the other person’s happiness is more important than your own.”

Eat Your Colorful Veggies?
by Gretchen Nollman and William Koellner, Master Gardeners

Eating “colors” is an excellent way to insure your health. It is a simple way to convey the idea that eating a variety of colorful foods helps to ensure you receive a complete range of nutrients. Children understand this simple concept without question. The results are safe and confident building blocks for everyone’s health. We are all very familiar with green vegetables and yellow, orange and red fruits and vegetables, but what about the less common purple, blue and black varieties? Is there a benefit to growing and consuming more of these foods? A diet high in the consumption of any fresh fruits and vegetables is associated with a reduced risk of chronic disease, building strong bones, good dental care. They are an important source of essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and also phytonutrients. We are all familiar with vitamins, minerals and fiber, but what about phytonutrients? “Phyto” refers to the Greek word for plant, and phytonutrients are natural chemical compounds found in plants. They help protect plants from pests, disease, and ultraviolet radiation. They are also responsible for a plant’s color. Phytonutrients have been found to provide health benefits to humans when consumed. Unlike vitamins and minerals though, they are not considered “essential” for life, so there are no recommended daily allowances.

Because of this, they are often referred to as phytochemicals. Each color of food provides different phytochemicals which work in different ways. Eating a variety of colors ensures that we derive all of their various benefits. Purple foods contain anthocyanins which have been shown in studies to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Anthocyanins are flavonoids noted for pigmentation, which provide the range of colors in red, purple and blue in fruits and vegetables, but flowers and cereals.
Eat Your Colorful Veggies? ... Continued
by Gretchen Nollman and William Koellner, Master Gardeners

Carrots, not the common orange variety, but rather the amethyst-colored carrots which are considered to be a superfood. Did you know carrots were originally that color?

As early as 900 A.D. there is historical evidence that cultivated carrots were purple and yellow in color. The earliest carrots date to the areas of present day Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria. Orange didn’t show up until the 1500’s in northern Europe, where it was the result of a genetic mutation. A given plant would produce yellow, red, and orange varieties, but not all of one color. It is believed the Dutch cultivated these natural genetically modified crops and were able to breed them to produce the 100% orange variety we know today.

With today’s common orange carrot, it is the beta-carotene (vitamin A precursor) and similar carotenoids which are responsible for producing its bright color.

With the heirloom purple carrots – which are once again becoming popular – their pigment comes from anthocyanin content. It’s been said that they may also help improve memory and enhance vision as well as decrease the risk of heart disease and certain cancers. The total anthocyanin content of foods varies greatly, but in general, the deeper the color, the greater the concentration of anthocyanins.

USDA states that on the average people consume 47 pounds of Potatoes annually, 32 pounds of tomatoes, 8 pounds of onions, 7 pounds of head lettuce, 5 pounds of sweet corn and carrots and 4 pounds of romaine and leaf lettuce.

Some purple and blue foods that we can grow in our own gardens include potatoes, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, tomatoes, blueberries
and blackberries. There are many varieties to be found in seed catalogs, and now is a perfect time of year to think about trying something new.

Potatoes are thought to have originated from the high altitudes areas in Peru where they grew in shallow, rocky soil. The purple pigment may have developed as a defense against the strong sunlight. The darkest purple potatoes have four times the antioxidant potential of regular potatoes according to the USDA publications, making them comparable to kale, Brussels sprouts, and spinach. Purple potato varieties such as All Blue, Adirondack Blue and Purple Majesty are quite striking and make stunning chips or fries.

The earliest carrots were mainly purple or yellow and Cosmic Purple and Purple Haze are purple-skinned varieties with orange and yellow centers. Do not peel these carrots and reap all of the benefits of the phytonutrients contained in the skin. Purple Sun are carrot varieties that have dark purple skin that continues through all but the occasional white central core. Eggplant, because of its beautiful, glossy skin, contains many phytonutrients. Black Beauty and Black Egg are common varieties. Patio Baby grows no taller than 24” and is ideal for containers. It produces 2-3” long egg-shaped fruits.

The Indigo Rose tomato is a semi-determinate variety that produces round, 2-3” fruits that have purple coloring on any parts exposed to sunlight, while the shaded portions remain a deep red color.

Indigo Blue Berries is an indeterminate cherry tomato which ripens from
green to purple to nearly black with a dark red bottom.

There are also corn varieties such as Black Mountain and Hopi Blue, a striking purple cauliflower called Graffiti, and blocky, thick-walled peppers such as Merlot and Purple Beauty. Bush bean varieties include Royal Burgundy and Purple Queen, and lettuce varieties such as Blackjack, Merlot, Outrageous, and Four Seasons are tasty, beautiful, and nutritious.

If you are looking for something new to grow this season, and you would like to make your plate beautiful like a rainbow, consider trying some of these phytonutrient rich plant varieties.
"The best love is the kind that awakens the soul and makes us reach for more, that plants a fire in our hearts and brings peace to our minds."

– Nicholas Sparks

Solution to Crossword on Page 15
***Announcements!***

A great selection of gardening magazines is available for your winter reading!

Emma Mae via Lynn left them to be shared with you. Stop in at the Extension Office and take what you would like! Lynn will get them to the office in the next week or two.

Would you like to be featured in the March 2021 Newsletter?

As you prepare for your spring and summer garden, send us pictures of your preparations, seedlings, or other items that show your efforts to prepare for your 2021 Garden!

Send Pictures by February 26th to:

Erin Parks
esgavin@gmail.com
**2021-2022 Muscatine County Master Gardener Board**

**Board Members**
Mary Wildermuth, Chair (2022)
Rachel Horner Brackett, Vice Chair (2021)
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Ron Jensen (2022)
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( ) Year term expires as of Dec. 31