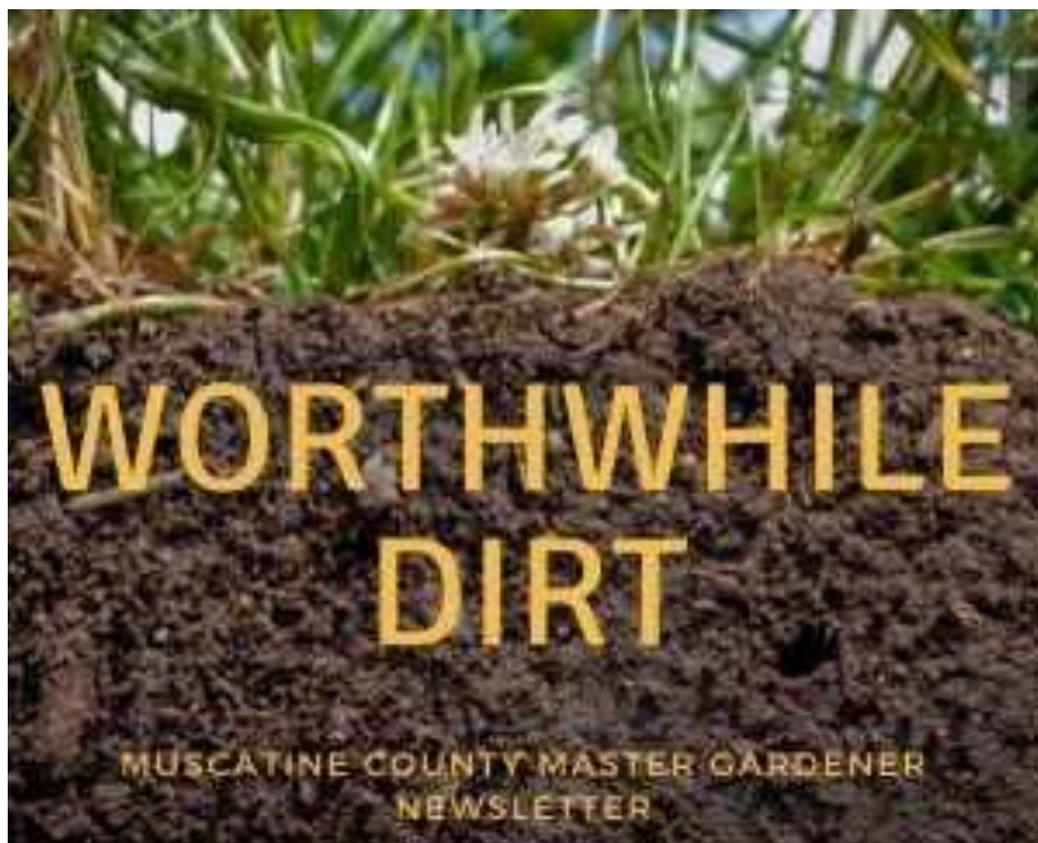


**AUGUST 2020**

**Muscatine  
County**



# WORTHWHILE DIRT

## In this Issue:

**Make sure to see  
EVERYPAGE in the  
newsletter, lots of great  
pictures and information  
included this month!**



## You're invited!

Come join us on Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm via WebEx for a tour of the Iowa State Fairgrounds Gardens. Please use this link to access the meeting:

<https://iastate.webex.com/iastate/j.php?MTID=m9e7561e0ddf50f48cf6d2dd075438a9a>

This is a general Master Gardener Meeting with a Tour of the gardens. We will convene online to discuss your thoughts about happenings this Fall. The Board will then convene taking those thoughts into consideration in our Board Meeting.

Education Hours will be given.

We hope to "see" you there!

Master Gardener Bill Koellner has arranged a special virtual tour for us of the beautiful Iowa State Fair Gardens on Tuesday evening, August 11, 2020 at 6pm. At the conclusion of the tour we will convene all Master Gardeners to hear thoughts about proceeding for the Fall. The General Meeting will conclude after comments have been received and then the Board will meet to respond to the received requests and thoughts!!

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# News from Education Coordinator

## Muscatine County Master Gardener Virtual General Meeting

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Education Hours will be given.

*Though most events are still not taking place due to COVID-19, we are fortunate to have access to so many online events and classes. The choices are unlimited! Check out a few of these below. **What have you been watching? Please let us know!***

### Trees Forever

Trees Forever is a nonprofit on a mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community, and promoting stewardship. Look [HERE](#) for a library of videos.

### Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

[Safe Mushroom Foraging Part 2](#) –

August 4 via Zoom video conferencing

See a full list of upcoming events here:

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/events>

University of Illinois Extension Look [HERE](#) for a complete listing.

[Good Growing Webinar: Landscaping Fact or Fiction](#), Wednesday, August 5

[Four Seasons Gardening: Adventures in Edible Landscaping](#), Tuesday, Aug 11, 1:30 pm

[Good Growing Webinar: Basics of Tree Fruit Diseases](#), Wednesday, August 12, 3 pm

[Good Growing Webinar: Getting Started with Composting](#), Wednesday, August 26, 3 pm

The Muscatine Branching Out organization is busy planning its annual Fall Tree Program. The applications will be available September 8th.

Pickup will be October 1st from 4-7 pm.

We plan to social distance and keep customers safely in their vehicles. Volunteers would be appreciated to help direct traffic and fill out paperwork prior to loading the trees. If you can help - please contact Hannah



# News from the Chair

By Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener

Yes, in 1856, Muscatine hosted the Grand State Fair and again in 1857. In 1856 one day's attendance was over 15,000 people. The highlight of the 1857 Fair was the new addition of the "Plowing Contest" 7 Contestants plowed ¼ acre turning a furrow of 6 inches deep. The record winner turned the dirt in 48 minutes while the slow guy did it in 61 minutes!!

So are we in an unusual time not to have the State Fair this year? Well pretty much, however 2020 is only the 6<sup>th</sup> time since 1854 that the fair has had to be cancelled. The pandemic of 1918 seems not to have been one of those years. However, there was no Fair in 1898 during the Spanish American War and the World's Fair in Omaha. There was a pause during WWII from 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945.

Our, state's fair is internationally known and is the single largest event in Iowa. It is one of the oldest and largest agricultural and industrial expositions in the United States. Over 1 million people from all over the world attend the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines. It is known to be a salute to our best agriculture, industry, entertainment and achievement. It is the heartbeat of the Midwest, unequalled and unduplicated.

In 1879 the Fair located to Des Moines, seeking a permanent home. Used for many years "Brown's Park located between 38<sup>th</sup> on the east, 42<sup>nd</sup> on the west, Center Street on north and Grand Avenue on the south. Finally, on September 7, 1886 a permanent was secured on the east side of Des Moines between University and Dean Avenues east 30<sup>th</sup> to East 36<sup>th</sup> Street.



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In 1890 "all the leading newspapers had tents on "newspaper row". There were 3 courts of tennis tournaments. A division fence was built in the campgrounds "to prevent any stampede of horses among the campers." The largest crowd of 50,000 attended on September 3. Electric light was used at night for a cost of \$3 per lamppost. A landscape architect was hired to furnish plans for "parks, roads and walks", as well as, locations for new buildings.

1895 brought 2 days of bicycle races and prizes valued at \$800.

1902 saw the opening of the Livestock Pavilion, which was built in less than 4 months at a cost of \$45,000. The building still stands today!!

Ameila Earhart visited the Fair in 1908 and saw her first airplane. Supposedly she was unimpressed with "the thing made of wood and wire." In 1911 the Wright Brothers were contracted for 4 flights per day during the Fair.

In 1911 Machinery Hall, a 5.5 acres building now known as the Varied Industries Building was constructed.

The 1918 Fair was known for its Spirit of Patriotism since the various exhibits demonstrations in the line of food conservation were proof that the people of Iowa appreciate the (wartime) situation. A style show emphasizing "Conservation in ing" was held every afternoon in the auditorium of the Women and Children's ing. Silo Town consisting of a dozen or more silos, was built to call attention to government's food conservation campaign.



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In 1975 a Grandstand record was set when "Chicago" thrilled the crowd grossing over \$129,260 – more than any single show in the history of all fairs in the United States and Canada at that time. Other shows included Charlie Rich, Redd Foxx, and Liza Minelli.

2002 brought the \$10.2 million renovation of the Varied Industries Building making it the largest single exhibit building in the state.

2011 celebrated "100 Years of the Butter Cow" and attendance of 1,080,959 attendees and sold out Grandstand shows for Train/Maroon5, Def Leppard/Heart, REBA/Jerrod Niemann, Jason Aldean/Chris Young/Thompson Square and the introduction of the Iowa Craft Beer Tent.

"From simple beginning, the Iowa State Fair has grown larger, longer and wider in scope. It has become a pacesetter in the industry. The Fair's evolution from a simple stock show to today's agricultural, industrial and entertainment extravaganza is a direct reflection of Iowa's evolution from an untilled prairie to the center of the nation's food production. For more than 15 decades more than a century in the same location, the Fair has instructed, influenced and guided an agricultural people in making agricultural history.

Never veering from its primary purposes, the celebration of excellence, the recognition of individual achievement and the enhancement of agriculture. Whether it's Grandma's pickles, Dad's farm gadget, the neighbor's Cookout Contest entry or the sister's photography, the emphasis continues to focus on recognition of the particular talent or skill that makes each person unique. The Fair is the true ever-changing reflection of what's best about Iowa and her people!!

# Zion Lutheran Church Donation Garden

By Terri Hanson , Master Gardener



Garden Crew Helpers

Egg plant galore

Crazy Cucumbers and tomato plants!

## Hy-Vee One-Step Garden Update

Submitted By Lynn Pruitt , Master Gardener

Thanks to the efforts of Nancy Dew, retired Hy-Vee Dietitian, and Dotse Ekoue, 2020 Master Gardener Intern, the Hy-Vee One-Step Donation Garden got planted and is doing remarkably well. Emma Mae Pruitt added to the beauty of this garden by transplanting some of her perennials to the flower display. In prior years the children of Flickinger Learning Center joined in the planting but they were not available this year due to COVID-19. Residents of the adjacent Jesus Mission continue to help out with watering, weeding and harvest, making this truly a community effort.



# Church of Christ Donation Garden

By Bonnie Reeb, Master Gardener

Young Neighbor helper cleaning vegetables for mcsa.  
Training them early



Wind damage flattened sweet corn crop



Volunteers helping mulch and weed in June



Looking forward to a sweet corn crop



# Church of Christ Donation Garden

By Bonnie Reeb, Master Gardener

The Master Gardener donation garden located behind the Church of Christ on north Mulberry was the best ever! The planting was delayed because of the unusually late, cold spring, but finally we managed to fill every square foot of the church garden with vegetable plants and---rows and rows of sweet corn! We felt like real Iowa farmers. And, like real Iowa farmers, we counted our losses after a short, but devastating hard rain and wind storm flattened our crop of tasseling corn. After several weeks, the corn hasn't straightened up, but we will be able to harvest a portion of it. The rest of the garden looks great.

So far we have around 300 pounds of produce donated to the Food Pantry and also bring some to the Jesus Mission and other individuals in need.

Other than the pesky moles that ate up our beets, the rest of the garden is doing well. We don't know Lynn Pruitt's secret, but his tomatoes could win a prize! I'm sure there's some one pounders in there! Our vegetables are: cabbage, onions, potatoes, beets, tomatoes, peppers, jalapenos, eggplant, okra, broccolli, zucchini, butter-nut squash, basil, kale, and corn.

We are hopeful for a bouniful harvest!

Bonnie Reeb



# Zoo Garden

By Kathy Chalupa, Master Gardener

The Weed Park Zoo Garden is reaching its peak of summer bloom. Volunteers are sure hoping the cooler temps stick around for a while. There are a lot more visitors

The committee is searching for options to replace the audio kiosks. While some of the recordings just need to be changed out - the speakers are obsolete, the boxes aren't very attractive, and we're just not keeping up with technology.

Once a plan is in place and we get a cost estimate - we'll do some fundraising and get the new system installed.

Anyone who'd like to help or have input on the project - please call Kathy at (563)299-0887

Flowers by Jan Koellner



# Garden Walk.. Pictures!!!!

By Heather Harroun, Master Gardener



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# Muscatine County Fairgrounds— Office

Complied By Lynn Pruitt and Bill Koellner , Master Gardener



## Muscatine County Fair- grounds— Flowers



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## Best Plants during a drought

By Bill Koellner, Master Gardener

Planting gardens can be difficult with changing climates, particularly with unplanned drought conditions. A drought can be a gardener's worst nightmare. When a hot, dry weather pattern settles in, it affects your landscape in a variety of ways. There is nothing we can do to prevent a drought, but there are some strategies we can enact to help minimize the effect it has on your yard. In addition, we can select plants that are beautiful under all climatic conditions.

### Impacts of a Drought

The most obvious way a drought affects your garden is the way it makes our plants look: Healthy green foliage wilts, develops crispy brown edges, or dies completely; flowers fade more quickly or fail to appear at all; plants (even weeds) grow more slowly. Drought weakens your plants, increasing how susceptible they are to both insects and disease. It also makes plants less winter-hardy, especially if the drought occurs in fall as plants are going dormant. The hot, dry conditions have a lasting effect, too—trees and shrubs can take several years to fully recover from drought

### What to Do During Drought

Although you cannot change the temperature outside, there are some things you can do to help your garden in times of drought.

### Water Your Garden

It is the most obvious strategy, of course, but to stay healthy, most garden want 1 inch/week. In most cases, it is better to apply the water weekly or every other week. It's a bit of a waste to give your plants less water more frequently: Doing so discourages the roots from growing as deeply into the soil and also inefficient as more water is lost to evaporation.

Mulch is not only the plants best friend but also the gardener. Two to three inch-deep mulch when drought gardening can do wonders: It keeps the soil cooler and shields the ground from direct sun. The benefit is that moisture stays in the soil longer, where it's more available to plants. Run a soaker hose underneath your mulch to maximize water savings: Water will be delivered directly to the ground and slowly. It will also keep plant foliage dry, which helps prevent many common fungal diseases such as black spot on roses. [Deadhead Your Flowers as Removing spent blooms before they have a chance to set seed and saving energy for your plants.](#) Plants need to adapt to ever-increasing drought conditions or die. Some plants are drought resistant. Drought tolerant plants are quite rare in nature and can endure long periods with no water at all.

These structural features include the external armor of plants that protects them against water loss, as well as tools to help the plants absorb and store water. Drought-resistant plants can be specially adapted to live and survive in very dry environments. These plants often look quite different from plants living in areas where water is easily available.

Plants will absorb water through their roots and release water as vapor into the air through these stomata. To survive in drought conditions, plants need to decrease transpiration to limit their water loss. Some plants that live in dry conditions have evolved to have smaller leaves and therefore fewer stomata. Extreme examples are plants with leaves that resemble spiky thorns.

## Best Plants during a drought

By Bill Koellner, Master Gardener

Some plants may also completely shed their leaves in a drought, to prevent water loss. The basic rule is that fewer leaves mean less water loss through transpiration. Some adaptations are quite clever and involve plants “escaping” drought as seeds. The seeds survive during the dry spells and very quickly germinate, grow and produce more seeds when rains fall. These seeds are then scattered and can also survive extreme harsh conditions for long periods of time. As we look at our gardens, we need to plan a season ahead. Do not wait for a dry period to plant, but intersperse drought resistant plants in our gardens, they are as beautiful as our annual and perennial plants. I want to share just a few of these plants with you in this article.



### Denim 'n Lace (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)

A fantastic plant that is an extremely drought resistant perennial is the “perennial of the year”, 'Denim 'n Lace' (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*). Gardeners have long loved Russian Sage for its airy texture and the ability to blend with pretty much any flower color. Most Russian Sage is large and leans over but 'Denim 'n Lace' is different. 'Denim 'n Lace' doesn't get too tall, has stronger stems and a more upright habit than most older varieties. Lacy-like, bright sky-blue flowers. This will provide great color nearly all season long. Plant this in full sun, and you can forget about it – “Denim

'n Lace” is drought tolerant. A perfect perennial for hot and dry climates. This plant is cold hard and for zones 3 – 8 and loves full sun. This plant is a late emerging species but provides good color late into fall. For planting considerations, height is 28 -32 inches and spread is 34 to 38 inches.

### Achillea (Yarrow) *Achillea* 'Firefly Peach Sky'

Yarrow is one of the easiest perennials to grow and is a good choice for everyone. All it needs is full sun and well-drained soil. It thrives in average to poor soil and is drought tolerant once established. Plants grown in rich soil tend to be tall and floppy. All yarrow plants prefer dry conditions and grow 20 -28 inches in height. Yarrow will attract bees. Leaves are fern like. Yarrow is self-seeding by rhizomes. Grows in Zones: 3-8.



### Pyromania - Red Hot Poker *Kniphofia*

Red hot pokers explode onto the scene in early summer when their fiery red, orange and yellow flower spikes shoot up above the clump of grass like foliage. Unlike many varieties, members of the Pyromania series are re- the way through summer. If you they are slender but tough, storing drought conditions. They grow and appreciate more moisture zones 5b (with protection) to 9, full



bloomers, extending their flower show all feel their leaves and stems, you will notice plenty of water to help the plants through and bloom best in lean, well-drained soils when they are in bloom. Perennial in sun, 2-4' tall.

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## Hollyhocks and the Cottage Garden

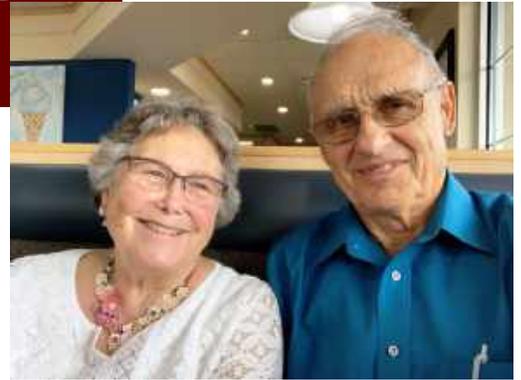
By Emma Mae and Lynn Pruitt, Master Gardeners

When we were children, hollyhocks were the standard hometown flower – they seemed to grow and thrive along back fences and adjacent to vegetable gardens with little or no special planning, planting or attention. No one, at least no one in our rural areas, knew them by their technical name: *Alcea rosea*. Hollyhocks were the standard fare for the proverbial cottage garden back then, and today can be for your garden as well.

Once we were married and acquired our own land for a home, we made sure there was plenty of space for our sons to run and play, and for gardening – both vegetable and flower. And, the legendary hollyhock soon found its way to grace the boundaries of gardens and perimeters of buildings. Since the hollyhock often comes up volunteer, our weeding hoe has been trained to save the new seedlings for subsequent transplanting to prime garden locations. We have learned to transplant early in the plant's life to protect the taproot which soon extends quite deep to provide nourishment and stability for this potentially very tall plant. Back row locations are preferable because of hollyhocks' tall stature. The website [www.gardeningknowhow.com](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com) says hollyhocks can reach heights of 9 feet. We have one this year that reached 9'-10.5" (see in accompanying photos). Most hollyhocks are biennials – they grow strong roots and stalks the first year – most of the beautiful blooms occur the second year. But don't worry about having to re-

plant them after that second year.

With the help of birds and the rest of nature, the hollyhock seeds find their way back into the soil and next year will likely produce several new plants. If you want to try your luck at planting seeds on your own, do it in the early spring about the time of the last frost. Or, you can get a jump on spring by starting the seeds inside and transplanting them outside once spring arrives. Like many plants, the young tender hollyhock plants like well-drained but moist rich soil to get their start. They thrive in full sun, so pick a sunny site along the back fence or next to the south side of your house or shed. If your soil is not a rich loam, you can add a little compost and fertilizer to aid the hollyhock's survival and growth. About the only problem we have growing hollyhocks is fungus or "rust" on the lower leaves. This can be minimized by avoiding watering directly on the leaves, and with the periodic use of a fungicide starting early in the



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## Hollyhocks and the Cottage Garden

By Emma Mae and Lynn Pruitt, Master Gardeners

Here's an interesting quote from [www.gardendesign.com](http://www.gardendesign.com): "Hollyhocks support the lifecycle of painted lady butterflies as a host plant for their caterpillars and also attract other pollinators such as bees and hummingbirds. If you've got a cottage garden, it's just not complete without a few hollyhocks gracing the edges." The same website also suggests these hollyhock tips:

- Hollyhocks add drama and height, making an impressive backdrop to shorter perennials.

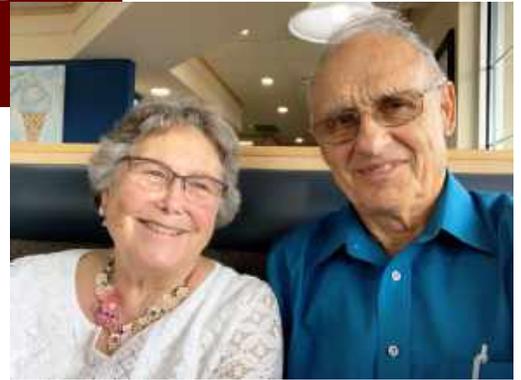
- Attract hummingbirds and butterflies to your garden.

Plant with companions such as dahlia, clematis, Shasta daisy, shrub rose, baby's breath, black-eyed Susan, phlox, sweet William and climbing roses.

- Include denser plants in front of them to hide their sometimes unattractive legs. Hollyhocks can be tricky to transplant due to their long taproots, so locate them accordingly so they won't have to be moved.

I, Emma Mae, have fond memories of my grandparents' garden and the area they reserved for hollyhocks. Each summer my cousins and I would make hollyhock dolls. I credit my grandfather's quiet and methodical gardening practices for inspiring my

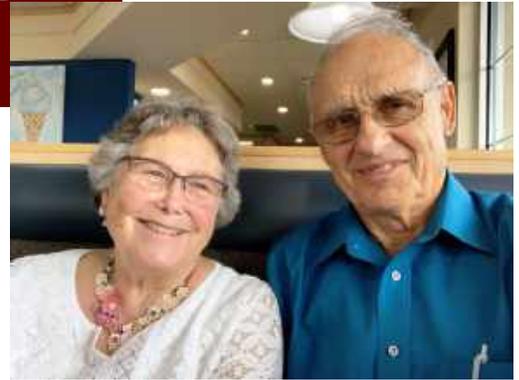
own passion for this work of love in cooperation with nature.



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# Hollyhocks and the Cottage Garden

By Emma Mae and Lynn Pruitt, Master Gardeners



## Muscatine County Extension Office

1601 Plaza Place

Muscatine, IA 52761

563-263-5701 or 800-992-0894

Iowa State University Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. Iowa State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

### Current Emails and Addresses

As a reminder – keep both the Extension Office current on any changes of e-mail addresses, phone numbers, or mailing addresses. These need to be current to keep you — our members — informed.

## 2020 Muscatine County Master Gardener Board

### Board Members

Mary Wildermuth, Chair (2021)\*

Rachel Horner Brackett, Vice Chair (2020)\*

Heather Harroun, Sec/Treas(2020)

Kathy Haltmeyer(2020)

Ron Jensen (2021)

Carolyn Lemaster(2021)\*

Ed Moreno (2020)

Maryrose Peterschmidt(2020)

Mary Danner (Past Chair)

Angela Weber (Intern)

( )Year term expires as of Dec. 31

\* Going off Board Dec 31, 2020 or 2021 but eligible for re-election



### Editorial Comments:

I enjoyed putting this together and look forward to more! If I missed anything or you don't see something that should be in here, please let me know by emailing me at

nollmanag@gmail.com or calling me 319—541-1462. Thanks! Gretchen Nollman

