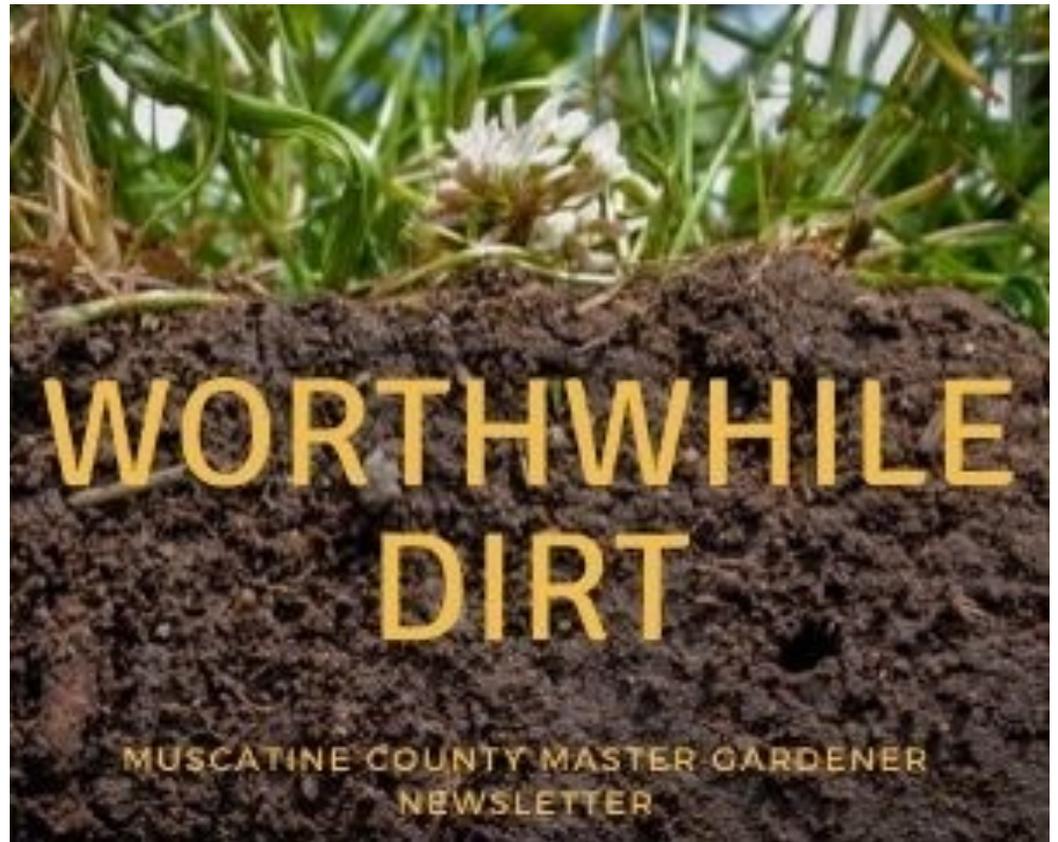


OCTOBER 2020

Muscatine
County



WORTHWHILE DIRT

Good news!

Our next Master Gardener meeting will be a great opportunity to socially distance outside and meet in person. We will be meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at the Muscatine Arboretum with Charles Rickey at 5:30 pm for a tour!

Put this on your calendar today and read more about it in the October issue of the newsletter for further details!

Thank you, Carolyn Le-Master for making the arrangements!

See you for peak leaf color and getting together!



News from Education Coordinator



Muscatine Arboretum Tour Tuesday, October 13 5:30 p.m.

Charles Rickey will guide us on a tour of the Arboretum. Let's meet at Rick's office – the red maintenance building at the end of Harmony Lane. Parking places are located to the left and to the right of the building.

Gardening in the Air! (webinar) Virtual Gardening Saturday, October 3 & 10, 2020 9:00 a.m. – noon CST

2020 so far has been quite different than years past! E-learning has really taken center stage. As we learn new things over the "air" via internet join us for "Gardening in the Air!"

University of Illinois Extension and Iowa State University Extension have teamed up to offer two virtual gardening Saturday events. Combining expertise from both institutions we are offering an assortment of current topics for you to pick and choose from. All will be offered via ZOOM so participants must have internet access.

Gardening in the Air! Will be offered on Oct. 3 & Oct. 10 and each will offer different tracks and topics.

Each Virtual Saturday will offer three tracks, each track offering a different program at 9 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. You decide which ones you want to participate in. We will send you all the ZOOM links and access to handouts prior to each Virtual Saturday.

For complete information, look here: [Gardening in the Air ISU Extension
https://web.extension.illinois.edu/registration/default.cfm?RegistrationID=22550](https://web.extension.illinois.edu/registration/default.cfm?RegistrationID=22550)

No Hours Requirement in 2020

There will be no hours requirements for Iowa Master Gardener volunteers and interns in 2020. While many of you have found ways to volunteer while socially distanced, MG volunteers will not be required to volunteer or participate in continuing education in 2020. [See the letter from Dr. John Lawrence here.](#)

If you do decide to log hours, please sign in to the [Volunteer Reporting System here.](#)

News from the Chair

By Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair

Dear Muscatine County Master Gardeners:

The Muscatine County Master Gardener Board met via Webex on September 8, 2020. We discussed future meetings and decided to host some educational sessions that could be held outside or in a socially distancing acceptable site.

We also talked about using Zoom versus Webex. Both Rachel Brackett and Ed Moreno offered to locate a Zoom meeting source. Ed successfully, asked the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine if we might use their license when we meet. This will be our format when we reconvene online.

We will meet on ***Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 5:30 P.M.*** at the Muscatine Arboretum (***red maintenance building off of Harmony Lane***) with Charles Rickey for a tour and time to gather to see one another. (masked or socially distanced, but outside). A special thank you to Carolyn Lemaster for making the meeting arrangements.

We are planning on another educational session on November 10, 2020 with details to follow.

Hopefully, this newsletter finds everyone safe and healthy as you complete your Fall Gardening and Spring preparations. Please let myself or another board member know of your interest in a specific topic or question you may have. We are: Kathy Haltmeyer, Heather Haroun, Rachel Horner Brackett, Ron Jensen, Carolyn Lemaster, Ed Moreno, Maryrose Peterschmidt.

See you on the 13th!!

Mary Wildermuth, Chair



A Brief History of Farmers' Markets all beginning in Egypt !!

By Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener

The origin of farmers' markets can be traced back to Egypt, over 5,000 years ago. Farmers along the Nile came together to sell their fresh produce. The first known farmers' market in the USA appeared in Boston in 1634. It would make sense that these markets would have a presence so far back in history before the transportation of goods became accessible when communities were tightly-knit with the farmlands that surrounded them.

As cities began to sprawl across the countryside, pushing the farmlands further and further away from the communities they served, transportation and refrigeration opened up opportunities for these farms to lengthen their reach. In the 1700s, grocery stores became the popular source for produce and goods. Farmers markets began to disappear and interests shifted to these stores, abound with choice and convenience. When the USDA undertook its first census of farmers' markets in 1948, there were just six in all of California.

It wasn't until the 1970s, when America became health-conscious, that farmers' markets began to make an appearance again. Fresh, healthy, and easy-to-prepare foods became the priority for housewives and their families. Thus, the public began to remember the quaintness of farmers' markets, and all the access to fresh, healthy foods they provided.

Between 1994 and 2008, farmers' markets really began to hit their stride. The number of markets increased 300% in that time, and continue to grow to this day. Today, there are more than 2,600 farmers' markets across the country, at which Americans spend \$1.1 billion annually.

Why they are so popular

If you are not a regular participant in your local farmers' market, you may be wondering why the surge in popularity. You may be asking are they really so much better than grocery stores?

The short answer is no. Grocery stores will always be a source for many of our daily needs. Yes, anything you get from a farmers' market, you can get from a grocery store. But farmers' markets can make a great supplement, with quite a few benefits that may send you looking for your nearest market.

Local Foods are healthier

Fruits and vegetables are most nutritious when they are ripe. Studies have proved that many nutrients are formed as the food ripens. But the moment they are picked, their

sugars begin to convert to starch, their plant cells begin to shrink and their nutrients begin to diminish.

When you buy produce at a grocery store, you may be buying items that had been harvested across the country, or even internationally. That requires weeks of transportation, during which the produce continues to lose nutrition. What's more, in order to arrive at your local store ready to eat, the produce must be harvested weeks in advance, so many of the nutrients never even form. As if that's not enough, these foods are often treated with gasses that delay their ripening – and, in turn, their ability to form nutrients – in order to ensure they survive their long journey. To make matters worse, they may be exposed to ethylene gas, in order to artificially “ripened”.

However, when you buy from a local farmers' market, you are often getting the produce direct from local farmers. Which means that the produce has only traveled a few miles and subsequently can be picked during the ripening stage and thus are more nutritionally-packed. What's more, farmers sell seasonally. Studies have shown that off-season produce may see a reduction in their nutrients. Finally, Local farmers also tend to use fewer chemicals than large, industrialized farms.

Local foods are more environmentally-friendly

Conventional agriculture uses many more resources than sustainable agriculture and pollutes water, land, and air with toxic agricultural by-products. The average piece of produce in the U.S. travels 1,500 miles, while local food may only travel 100 miles (or less), according to researcher Rich Pirog at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. All this shipping uses large amounts of natural resources (especially fossil fuels), contributes to pollution, and creates trash with extra packaging. This means that since local foods travel smaller distances, they actually reduce CO2 emissions.

They can also reduce emissions by preserving green space and strengthening the CO2 scrubbing power of plants. The popularity of farmers' markets leads to greater success for farmers, which means they are less likely to sell their land to developers. In fact, with growing consumer demand, young farmers are increasingly likely to enter the marketplace by developing unused lots into thriving urban gardens.

A Brief History of Farmers' Markets all beginning in Eqypt !!

By Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener

It's cheaper

Since you are cutting out the middleman, you are also cutting out operating costs and profit margins that grocery stores add to the price, not to mention the price increase for organic and locally grown food.

Also, since farmers' markets only sell 1-2 times a week, they have significantly lower retail costs than super markets.

Lastly, farmers' markets sell seasonally, which means an abundance of produce that drives down the price.

Conclusion

Hopefully, you can begin to understand how farmers' markets came to be and why they are so popular. There are many other benefits, such as supporting family farms and the chance to communicate directly with the farmer, who just may provide you with tips, tricks, recipes, and more. It's also a great way to get out from under those fluorescent lights and out in nature, connecting with people in your community.

(article from HueTriton by Rene Galeson, August 5, 2019)

To find a local farmers' market near you, you can use this [online tool](#) from LocalHarvest or this [online directory](#) of farmers markets from the USDA.

Online tool address is <https://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets>

Online directory address is <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets>



If you haven't been to our local Muscatine Farmers Market you have a few Saturdays and Tuesdays left as the market closes for the season at the end of October. The Tuesday market is held in the parking lot of the Muscatine Mall in the late afternoon and the Saturday market is held in the morning 7:30-11:00 ish in the City Hall parking lot.



Flowers of Fall

Here are some fall flowers from our home
Thanks, Lynn and Emma Mae



Zion Lutheran Church Donation Garden

By Terri Hanson , Master Gardener

We found the culprit who was taking bites out of our tomatoes!

Zion's donation garden is winding down. We will pick whatever is left this past week and clean up the garden, to be ready for next spring.



Overwintering your favorite plants

By Bill Koellner, Master Gardener

As summer fades into fall, our thoughts turn to saving favorite plants for next year. With hardy perennials and shrubs the plants can be left to fend for themselves with little more than fall clean up and in some cases a nice mulching. Annuals are going to have their last hurrah and will eventually succumb to the freezing temperatures of fall nights. This leaves us with topicals, tender perennials and a few assorted plants that can be overwintered in the house.

Many of us have favorite plants that we would like to overwinter and keep for next spring. Which plants are good candidates to bring inside for the winter? Many tropicals, and plants sold as house plants will do fine through the winter indoors. Foliage plants tend to be better suited to overwintering indoors than full sun, flowering plants because they adapt more quickly to indoor conditions.

There is nothing wrong with trying to bring any plant through the winter indoors. Your likelihood of success is

higher with the plants listed below, but the worst that will happen is the plant won't make it. You can chalk those attempts up as learning experiences. Gardening is all about trying new plants or old plants in new places. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. Half the fun is in trying!

What is it about the inside of a house that makes it difficult for many plants? You probably would guess that low light levels are one potential problem. Your home has lower light levels to begin with and the short days of fall and winter also contribute to the problem. The second reason many plants do not adapt to indoor conditions is low humidity. The air inside your home, especially in winter, tends to be very dry. Many plants do not deal well with low levels of humidity. These two factors combined mean that many plants are not cut out to live indoors. Let's say that despite the many challenges you would like to try and overwinter a plant in your home.

Overwintering your favorite plants

By Bill Koellner, Master Gardener

The first thing to do is choose the plant or plants you want to bring inside. Be sure to bring your plants inside before frost has damaged the foliage. Choose only healthy plants to bring inside as the stress of the move will likely be the final blow to struggling plants. If the plant is already in a pot you can skip to the next paragraph. If the plant is in the ground, use a sharp spade or shovel to dig up the plant. You will want to try and get a good chunk of the root system. Remove part of the garden soil and place the plant in a pot. Fill in with a good potting mix. Garden soil tends not to have enough air space for container plants. Keep the soil level even or very slightly above the level of the garden soil. If you bury a plant too deep it will not be happy.

If the plant has been in a rather sunny area you can help decrease the shock it will experience coming indoors by placing it in a shady spot for a week or so. This will get it used to lower light levels and make the transition easier.

Next decide if the plant needs to be pruned before you bring it inside. Plants can generally be pruned back by as much as 1/2 without damaging the health of the plant. When pruning use a

sharp pair of pruning shears or scissors, you can also use a sharp knife. Clean your utensils between each plant. Use soapy water, rub them with alcohol, or dip them in milk (odd as it may seem milk will help prevent many viruses from spreading.) Be sure to remove any damaged or diseased portions of the plant.

Once you have your plants potted and pruned it is time to inspect them for debris, disease, and insects. Remove any dead foliage or other debris from the top of the pot. Dead and decaying foliage is a hiding place for insects and an incubator for diseases. Clean plants tend to be healthier.

Check for any insects and treat as necessary. It is important to remove insects before plants come inside. Insect populations tend to increase and spread quickly indoors. In the case of larger insects, like beetles, you can remove them by hand. If you see aphids or spider mites you will want to use a spray to kill them. If the infestation isn't large you can probably remove them by spraying the plant with a mixture of soap and water. A few drops of dish soap in lukewarm water can be very effective means of controlling insects.

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Spray the plant until it is dripping with the soapy mixture, be sure to get the underside of the leaves and the stems. If you can visibly see insects (like aphids and spider mites), you may want to take a damp cloth and gently wipe off the infested leaves and stems. For obvious reasons it will be easiest to use this method outside. There are also products that you can buy to treat for insects. If the plant is badly infected with aphids, mites or scale you should consider discarding the plant rather than trying to bring it indoors.

While checking for insects also look for disease. Common diseases include mildews and viruses. Mildew will generally be a white or grey powdery substance. Viruses will often cause the plant to have foliage that is yellowing, mottled, or stippled, the foliage just does not look right. Mildew can be treated with the same soap and water mixture used against insects. If you think your plant has a virus discard it.

Water the plant thoroughly before bringing it inside. Be sure to allow a good amount of water to run out of the drainage hole. This will help flush out any excess buildup of salt or fertilizer in the soil. You may want to follow this flush

with a light fertilizer application.

Move your plants indoors and place them in areas with bright light. If you have a sun porch you are lucky and should be able to overwinter many plants easily. You can use grow lights for supplemental light if you feel the interior of your house is too dim.

To help combat low humidity place a shallow pan filled with gravel underneath your plants. This water will evaporate keeping the area right around your plants more humid. You can also spray the area with a spray bottle a couple of times a week to help increase humidity.

While the plants are inside do not fertilize (unless the plant is growing vigorously then fertilize lightly once a month or so). You will also need to be careful not to over water. Plants inside will not use as much water as they did outside. Water only when the top of the soil is dry to the touch. When you do water try and dampen the whole root zone (a bit of water should drain out of the bottom of the pot.) It is very easy to accidentally kill your plant with kindness.

Plants in lower light situations will have

Overwintering your favorite plants

By Bill Koellner, Master Gardener

a tendency to stretch and become lighter green in appearance. Don't worry too much about this problem. If you can keep your plant alive till spring you can deal with the stretched plant later.

In spring when the days start to get longer you should see your plant begin to grow more vigorously (or again, some plants may not grow through the winter). When this new growth starts fertilize lightly with a water soluble fertilizer. Prune your plant back if it is looking stretched and unhappy. Your plant is likely to begin using more water so be sure to keep an eye on how quickly it is drying out. Lightly pinching new growth will encourage your plant to branch.

Once you start getting warm days, you may want to start introducing your plant to outdoor conditions. Moving plants outside during the day and inside at night will help harden it off. Gradually introducing a plant to cooler temperatures (hardening off) will help it acclimate to outdoor conditions. Once the threat of frost has passed, place the plant outside permanently.

Rules of Thumb for Overwintering Plants Indoors:

1. Choose only healthy plants.
2. Bring plants indoors before frost damages foliage.
3. Treat for disease and insects before bringing plants indoors.
4. Place in bright areas and add humidity using pebble trays or spray bottles.
5. Be careful not to over water.
6. When active growth starts in spring fertilize and prune as needed.
7. Introduce your plants slowly to outdoor conditions in spring.

A few plants to move indoors and will survive and thrive –

- ◇ Begonias
- ◇ Fuchsia
- ◇ Geraniums
- ◇ Abutilon (Flowering Maple)
- ◇ Caladium
- ◇ Small dwarf boxwoods
- ◇ Coleus
- ◇ Hibiscus
- ◇ Small colorful hot peppers
- ◇ Herbs: Basil, Chives, Parsley, Lemon Grass, Rosemary

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 DO ENJOY PUTTING THE NEWSLETTER TOGETHER, BUT PLEASE LET ME KNOW ASAP IF SOMETHING IS WRONG WITHIN IT, INSTEAD OF HEARING ABOUT IT A MONTH LATER, AS I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE IT. THANK YOU!
GRETCHEN NOLLMAN—
nollmanag@gmail.com

NEWS
YOU CAN
USE