What’s in this March newsletter...

⇒ News and Notes!
⇒ Spring Time Note
⇒ Sincere Appreciation
⇒ April theme word search
⇒ Planting Under Trees
⇒ Easter Egg Fun!
⇒ Hot Cross Buns
⇒ Simple Guide to Succulents
⇒ Spring Clean Up
Hello everyone! I hope you are all excited for spring! Just a reminder that the Master Gardener requirements have returned to normal – completion of 20 volunteer hours and 10 continuing education hours.

I encourage everyone to visit the Master Gardener Reporting System and sign their annual agreement. (https://mastergardenerhours.hort.iastate.edu/) If possible, I would also encourage everyone to enter their hours as they are earned so that you have less to enter at one time.

Master Gardener Goodies
Volunteering in your community? Show your Iowa Master Gardener volunteer pride.

⇒ **MG t-shirt or polo** ($15-$32) - show your MG volunteer pride with these red t-shirts and polo shirts. New sizes were recently added!

⇒ **MG Resource Guide** ($39) - this is the go-to gardening resource. This book is over 300 pages of recommendations for pruning trees, shrubs for wildlife, and flower bloom charts.

Master Gardener Items are available through the online ISU Extension and Outreach Store.

**ATTENTION!**

♦ Please stop at the Extension Office and enjoy looking through the wonderful selection of floral and gardening magazines shared by Lynne Pruitt in honor of Emma Mae.

♦ Be on the lookout for a spring ‘tree bloomin’ Arboretum tour!

♦ Muscatine FFA Plant Sale is April 23 & 30th and May 7th & 14th. (https://www.facebook.com/muscatineffa)

♦ Anyone who completed a background check in 2018 or prior will be receiving a letter in the mail that will need to be filled out and returned. All volunteers must complete screening every 3 years.
News from Education Coordinator
Thank You — Carolyn Lemaster

Iowa State University Master Gardener News

See the full list of upcoming events, webinars and plant sales here: https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/events

Horticulture & Home Pest News, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Buckeye Yard & Garden onLine, Ohio State University

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.

Master Gardener Application Information

Application Open: March 1, 2021
Application Deadline: July 1, 2021
Participants are notified of acceptance to MG Training in early August; payment due at that time.
Fee: $195 MG trainee, $550 ProHort
Online Course: August 30- November 5, 2021
https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/become-master-gardener
So Here we are!
By: Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair

So here we are. Enjoying the greening of our grass and our yards. Soon we will be mowing after the seeding and sowing! Spring is here 2021!!

And then there’s the blooming our flowers, trees and bushes!! As you can see I have helped my Easter Tree along with bunny eggs for brightening my world and yard!! Cheers to Spring!!

My personal thoughts for this April and Spring Season are those of joy....as many of us have gotten our Covid Vaccinations and we can begin to emerge from our long winter.... We can once again begin to rejoin our “usual activities”, soon including church and social gatherings and even our Easter Get togethers!!

My monthly ramblings are minimal as I encourage you to partake in the beauty of the season and the love of family and friends.

We have been lucky as the Nominating Committee consisting of Ron Jensen and Ed Moreno have successfully asked Terri Hanson and Brandy Olson to join our Master Gardener Board.

Ed Moreno, Rachel Brackett and I will soon be reading through our scholarship applications and selecting this year’s recipients of the newly named Emma Mae Pruitt Muscatine County Master Gardener Scholarship!!

If you have suggestions for Spring and or Summer Master Gardener Projects, please pass those on to a board member; including Brandy Olson, Rachel Brackett, Ed Moreno, Ron Jensen, Carolyn LeMaster, Kathy Halmeyer or me, Mary Wildermuth!!

Cheers to a beautiful Spring!!
Sincere Appreciation

by Lynn Pruitt, Master Gardener

For me, the memories of my dear wife Emma Mae will continue until the day I die. For those of you Master Gardeners who worked with her and had a chance to observe and experience her character of integrity and love, I think you also will continue to recollect her life for many years to come. For others who did not have the opportunity to know her, the Board’s decision to name the Muscatine County Master Gardener Scholarship after Emma Mae will continue her legacy into the future. I am so proud of who she was and what she did in her life. Thank you for maintaining the memories of her contributions to gardening in Muscatine County and beyond.
April Showers

S N Y V Y W E T A L O C O H C Z Q
E J A T H D E F G N I N N I G E B
K C D T H N N O T E K S A B M Q B
O U S W A R M E R W E A T H E R Y
J O L N T C X W C M W S I X I J E
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X R F M D A R G C N G J L T Q P S
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S E L D D U P N K H E B A L N G T
U U M O O L B X R S U R U A T F X
C A O B A S E B A L L O S M N E V

April Fool’s Day  Aries  Baseball  Basket  Beginning  Bloom  Bunny
Chicks  Chocolate  Earth Day  Easter  Flowers  Green  Grow
Jellybeans  Jokes  Planting  Plow  Puddles  Showers  Spring  Sun
Taurus  Warmer  Weather
Most of us have tried to plant under a tree, meet limited success. The reason our garden doesn't grow well can usually be attributed to dry shade. What exactly is dry shade?

Have you ever been outside when a sudden shower has you running for cover? If you run under a tree, you notice you don't get very wet. You are benefitting from the umbrella-like canape of the tree. At that time, it’s good for you, but bad for the plants under the tree. Add to this the thirsty roots of that same tree drinking up available water before the smaller plants have a chance, and you can understand what one of the problems with your struggling flower garden.

Adding organic matter to the soil is one of the best remedies for almost any gardening problem to include this one. But, be careful as adding soil under the canape of the tree can smother its roots and eventually kill the tree. Similarly, excessive digging under a tree can severely damage its root system.

You can, however, safely add 2–4-inch layer of compost to the soil beneath the tree. Then select small plants, so it is not necessary to dig large holes. That way you will disturb the tree roots as little as possible. Keep the garden well-watered, and the next year add an additional three more inches of soil amendment.

There are some plants that are better at accepting dry shade than others.

However, for your garden under the tree to really thrive, you will always have to water and fertilize it more regularly than you would most other gardens. Not only does your tree drink up the lion's share of the water, but it also utilizes many of the nutrients. If you use a natural fertilizer because, although it is true that plants can’t tell the difference between natural or chemical, the natural fertilizer actually builds your soil where the chemical does
Planting Under Trees... Continued

Bill Koellner and Gretchen Nollman, Muscatine County Master Gardeners

not.

An excellent idea for caring for a shade garden is to rake the leaves off of it and shred them in the fall, then put them back on the garden. Leaves falling onto your garden in the fall can become wet and matted and smother your smaller plants, but if you shred them then they break down easier and don’t smother the plants. But if you rake them out of the garden using a flexible rake, then shred them with a lawn mower with a bagger if possible. This practice will feed your plants, protect them from heaving, and help retain soil moisture.

If leaves fall onto your lawn, it is not necessary to rake them. Run over them with your non-bagging mulching mower and let the shredded leaves scatter over the grass. Do this regularly as the leaves fall, and you can digest up to 18 inches of leaves with no raking over a period of years. Your lawn will remain healthy and thankful for the extra nutrients that the leaves provide. Actually, this has occurred naturally without us mulching.

Looking for a suggestion for a good-looking plant combination for your shade garden? One of my favorite shade plants are hostas, dark leaved near the trunk and multi-colored leaves near the edge of the canape where more sun strikes the plants. Pair it Heuchera (Coral Bells) which has a silver leaf with red veining, and deep red highlights.

For a garden with a green and gold theme, try combining Hosta 'Sum and Substance' with Variegated Solomon's Seal along with the Heuchera 'Georgia
Planting Under Trees... Continued

Bill Koellner and Gretchen Nollman, Muscatine County Master Gardeners

Peach' for a deep red accent.

Ground covers also work well in your shade garden. Creeping Jenny is a bright yellow ground cover that stays close to the ground. It can really brighten up the shade or the sun garden. Another wonderful bright yellow ground cover for the shade is Vinca Minor 'Illumination'. It has bright yellow leaves which are edged in green. Keep in mind that anything called a "ground cover" gets its name because it spreads and multiplies. They all need to be restricted at some point.

Here is a list of additional plants that will tolerate dry shade. Lenten Rose, Lily of the Valley, Columbine, False Lamium 'Herman's Pride', Liriope, Pulmonaria (Lungwort), or Bergenia (try 'Lunar Glow').

For vines try: Climbing Hydranges, and Golden hops, but be cautious as they can get out of control.

This list would not be complete without including bulbs. Bulbs need sun to bloom, but when planted beneath deciduous trees, they bloom early before the trees leaf out in the spring so they do get their sun. Once the bulb completes its photosynthesis process after blooming, it actually prefers dry soil all summer.

Finally, for dry shade gardening is the use of pots. A couple beautiful pots placed among the ground cover in the shady area makes a very lovely picture. Two advantages are that you just have to water the pots, not the whole garden as often, and you can enjoy plants in the pots that won't tolerate the dry shade. Begonias, Caladiums, and Coleous are all good choices for the shade in pots. Going back to the idea of the Heuchera, I would add a bright blue glazed pot containing the red flowers of Dragon Wing Begonia mixed with another showy plant.
Have a little fun...dyeing Easter Eggs with vegetables and even Wine!!

1. Combine 1 qt water and 2 Tbsp white vinegar in a medium pot.
2. Bring it to a boil and add your dye ingredients for the egg color of your choice (listed below). Lower the heat and let simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Let cool. Strain the dye to remove any food fragments.
4. Add the eggs to the strained dye and let soak for at least 30 minutes. When it reaches the desired color, remove the egg with tongs and pat it dry with paper towels.

Orange Eggs: Add 4 cups yellow onion skins and follow the instructions above. For a brighter orange, let the eggs sit in the dye overnight.

Light Orange: Bring 2 cups water to a boil. Add 4 Tbsp paprika and white vinegar, and mix until combined. Pour the mixture into a jar and let cool to room temperature. Add an egg and soak until you are happy with the color. Remove with a slotted spoon and rinse with cool water. Let dry.

Yellow: Add 3 Tbsp turmeric and follow the instructions above.

Light Blue: Add 3 cups chopped red or purple cabbage and follow the instructions below. For a brighter blue, let the eggs sit in the dye overnight.

Dark Blue: Add 4 cups blueberries and follow the instructions above.

Deep Red: Add skins from 6 red onions. Add in 2 cups of water and 3 Tbsp of white vinegar to the pot. Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Let the mixture cool to room temperature and
strain the liquid into your jars. Add an egg and let soak until you are happy with the color. Remove with a slotted spoon and rinse with cool water. Let dry.

**Green:** Add spinach leaves to a saucepan and pour in 2 cups cold water and 4 Tbsp white vinegar. Bring it to a boil and follow the steps listed above.

**Purple:** Pour about a cup of red wine into a jar. Add an egg and let soak until you are happy with the color. Remove with a slotted spoon and rinse with cool water. Let dry.

**Burnt Orange:** Boil water in a tea kettle. Pour water into a jar with 3 black tea bags and let steep for 30 minutes. Let the water cool at room temperature. Add an egg and let soak until you are happy with the color. Remove with a slotted spoon and rinse with cool water. Let dry.
What Exactly are Hot Cross Buns?
Mary Wildermuth, Master Gardener Chair - *article by Kelli Foster*

A traditional hot cross bun is a yeasted sweet bun that’s lightly spiced and studded with raisins or currants, then marked on top with a cross that’s either piped in icing or etched into the dough.

While hot cross buns are now sold and enjoyed throughout the year, they were once reserved for Good Friday alone.

1. **A 12th-century monk introduced the cross to the bun.**
The origins of hot cross buns may go back as far as the 12th century. According to the story, an Anglican monk baked the buns and marked them with a cross in honor of Good Friday. Over time they gained popularity, and eventually became a symbol of Easter weekend.

2. **Hot cross buns gained popularity in Elizabethan England.**
Towards the end of the 16th century, Queen Elizabeth I passed a law limiting the sale of sweet buns to funerals, Christmas, and the Friday before Easter. The English were deeply superstitious, believed the buns carried medicinal or magical properties, and were fearful of those powers being abused. Some even believed that buns baked on Good Friday would never go stale.

As a way to get around the law, more and more people began baking these sweet buns at home. Not only did they grow in popularity, but the law became too difficult to enforce and was eventually rescinded.

3. **Superstitions about hot cross buns baked on Good Friday.**
There are also more than a few stories that indicate hot cross buns were baked on Good Friday for superstitious reasons. One tale states that buns baked on this day and hung from the rafters of a home would ward off evil spirits in the coming year. Another talks of these buns protecting sailors from shipwreck, while off at sea. Yet another version mentions that sharing the bun with a loved one guarantees friendship in the coming year.

*article by Kelli Foster, from Kitchn, March 30, 2015*
The Easter lily is representative of Christ's resurrection, it symbolizes purity, hope and innocence and new life of spring!

• The Easter season is masked with several legends and folklores about the lily and its religious significance. Easter Lily is the traditional flower of Easter and is highly regarded as a joyful symbol of elegance, beauty, spirituality, hope, and life.

• In Christendom the lily has come to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus because of its delicacy of form and its snow white colors. But have you ever wondered about the history and significance of this symbolic Easter flower, which adds elegance, grace and fragrance to millions of homes and churches during the spring time.

• Every year, on the first Sunday after the first full moon, churches are filled with exquisite Easter lilies. Churches at Easter time grace the altars and surround the cross with Easter Lilies, to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

• This importance rests even more clearly on a legend that the blood of Jesus, as it fell from the cross, was by a miracle transformed into flowers which filled heaven and earth.

• The popular Easter lily we use today to celebrate the holiday is referred to as ‘the white-robed apostles of hope.’ These beautiful trumpet shaped white flowers were brought to the United States in 1875 from Japan by an American tourist and named after the florist who made it popular. The flower retells the resurrection story with its life cycle. These snow white flowers symbolize new life and hope.

• The bulb of these flowers buried in the ground represents the tomb of Jesus and the glorious white trumpet-like fragrant flowers which grow from the bulbs symbolize His life after death. The snowy white color stands for the purity of the Divine Savior and the joy of the resurrection while the trumpet shape signifies Gabriel's trumpet call to rebirth and new life.
Spring Clean Up: The Zoo Garden!
By: Maryrose Peterschmidt, Master Gardeners

The Zoo Committee is once again planning a Spring Clean Up for the Zoo Garden in April. Depending which volunteer group we go with it should be a Saturday or Sunday in April. Just as soon as we get that date we can inform you. If you have never helped out for the clean up this is what we do, each garden will have a adult that instructs the volunteers what needs to be done. Such as raking leaves, cutting back ornamental grasses, removing any left over annuals or pruning a shrub. All the debris would be raked to the curb for city staff to pick. After the bed is cleaned out we next move lots of mulch into each of the beds. If we have enough adults we try to get all nine beds done. Now you can see why we need your help. Please try to set aside some time to help us. We have been doing this for several years both in the spring and fall so we extend a invite to you to join us.
April Showers

Solution to Crossword on Page 6
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.

2021-2022 Muscatine County Master Gardener Board

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Kathy Haltmeyer
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Carolyn Lemaster
Ed Moreno
Angela Weber (Intern)
Lauren Nerad—Co-editor
Erin Parks—Co-editor

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.