Green Thumb
The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners
January 2016

Sherri's View from the Garden

Happy 2016! January is named for the Roman god Janus, whose two faces allowed him to simultaneously look forward into the new year and back into the past. A quick look back convinces me to make a few resolutions for the upcoming gardening season. This year, I resolve to divide my perennials and trade plants with friends rather than continuing to buy, buy, buy- unless I'm at the PCMG plant sale. I pledge to always have fresh-cut flowers from the garden in my house during spring, summer, and fall. I promise to submit my master gardener hours gradually throughout the year instead of waiting until December 15 (music to Mary's ears, I'm sure). And finally, I vow to keep a gardening journal. If you too have a notion to start one, consider using a form that can take a little mud or water, like a three-ring binder with plastic sleeves. Many journals include drawings of the garden, photographs of various stages of growth, information on new plants, fertilizing schedules, past failures and successes, hours of shade and sun exposure, crop rotations, gardening techniques to try (for instance, the "lasagna method" is fun, easy, and will save many a back), and sources of inspiration, whatever they may be. Until we're out digging in the dirt, though, remember that the days are already getting longer. In the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley, "O Wind, if Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Sherri Soich, Steering Committee Chair sherrisoich@gmail.com or 515-710-5665.

Save the Dates

The PCMG 2016 Plant Sale dates/times for the public are Saturday, May 7, 8am to 4pm Sunday, May 8, noon to 4pmat the greenhouses as Victorian Acres.

Jen Jenkins

The 2016 Garden Tour will be in Clive and West Des Moines on June 25th, 2016. Eight wonderful gardens will be on the tour! We will have a Volunteer Spot Website set up in March where you'll be able to volunteer to be a garden host, to help advertise, or to help prepare one of these wonderful gardens. This tour is a wonderful inspiration for all gardeners.

Jerry Swinton, Garden tour chair, jersher4@gmail.com
Demonstration Garden

With the holidays behind us, and the garden resting under a blanket of snow, January is the perfect time to reflect on the year gone by and make resolutions for the coming year. On that note, we congratulate all of you who volunteered at the demonstration garden for the success we had in 2015 and we thank you for the support and patience you showed to the new co-chairs this past year. Now looking ahead in 2016, note that our spring planning meeting will take place on March 28. Other dates to mark on your new calendar are March 23rd and 26th, when the annual spring pruning labs will take place. This year, in addition to the two labs designed for intern participation, we are tentatively planning a third lab on March 30th, which will be open to all master gardeners who want to lend a hand cleaning up the fruit trees.

Best wishes to you all for a happy and healthy new year!

Co-Chairs, Ruth Doxon and Diane Ackerman

Discovery Garden

The ground is covered in snow, the sun set is a minute later each day, and the seed catalogs have arrived, it must be January. Seems like 2015 flew by in a flash, hopefully 2016 will be slower paced.

The Discovery Garden is continuing with the renovation plans, and will find out about several grant applications this month and early February, so everyone think positive thoughts about receiving the funds. We will keep everyone updated about our progress.

Happy New Year

Co-Chairs:
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Enabling Garden

January is the opportunity for a fresh start for most of us. The New Year allows us to reflect on the many accomplishments of last year and what we would like to get done in 2016. The same is true for the Enabling Garden. We will be scheduling a planning meeting in the near future to discuss some of the smaller projects we'd like to focus on, so look for more information either in an upcoming This-n-That or in the February Green Thumb.

Thanks to all of the volunteers that have helped out in 2015 and welcome to all that would like to help in 2016! Looking forward to a fun year in the EG.

We will be having our annual post-holiday potluck on Sunday, January 31st at 12:00 Noon. Location: 3205 Wolf Creek Road SW (in the Wolf Creek Clubhouse) in Bondurant, IA. Please plan to bring a potluck item to share. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP to Sandie Hamilton at: bhamil7132@aol.com. This is the perfect opportunity to catch-up with your garden friends and to perhaps meet some new ones!

Last but not least, we would like to welcome back Paula Winslow as an EG co-chair!

EG Co-Chairs: Sandie Hamilton, Paula Winslow, Christine Barker & Sharon Schoonover.

Greenhouse

Here's hoping everyone had a wonderful holiday.

Mark your calendars! Wednesday, February 3, 2016 is the first greenhouse work day. Work days start at 9:00 AM and end when that day's work is completed. Come when you can, leave when you must. The sign-in sheet will be on a clip board on the counter in the retail space. Sign-in and then get your assignment from that month's Captain. We have lots of seeds to sow, plugs to plant, and plants to grow. It should be a fun year. Remember, you need twenty hours of volunteer work to recertify. Don't forget your name badge and remember that the greenhouse is open to PCMCG and Interns only.

Keeping the twenty hours of volunteer work in mind, we still need help watering on non-work days. Our biggest need is on Thursday and Friday. Start time will depend on availability of volunteers. A Project Leader for each day will develop a work schedule to complete the watering task as efficiently and productively as possible. Those of you from the garden projects, food pantries, plant sale, and garden tour, these are plants being grown for you. Please help us grow your plants. To volunteer, contact Jean Schustek at jean.schustek@gmail.com.

Greenhouse co-chairs: Bob Helvey, Alda Helvey, Jean Schustek, and Cheryl Fridl
We heard what you think.

In December, we said "Now that Facebook has become so popular, Dawn Kasotia has set up a page which is for PCMGs only. Some folks have suggested we add an electronic version of our PCMG Directory. Let Mary know your opinion and whether all the same information should be included."

We only got a few responses to the paragraph above but most stated a preference to NOT have the directory available on-line. So we'll continue with just the printed version. If you need a copy, they can be available at the Extension Office and at the greenhouse this winter, if you request one.

Mary Farlow

PCMG Winter Program classes

Classes will start at 6:30 but you are welcome to join us for soup and bread starting at 6:00. Feel free to bring anything you want to share that would be a good addition to our meal.

The classes and meal are free but to be sure that we can have enough soup for everyone, it's important to pre-register by emailing education.dates4PCMG@gmail.com

January 7th
Harry Hillaker
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
"Historical Climate trends and Extremes in Iowa"

February 4th
Tivon Feeley
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
"The Fight to Protect Trees"

March 3rd
Lorin Knapp
"A Garden on the Edge"

April 7th
Greenhouse and Plant Sale
"What's New at the .......?"

Paula Winslow, program committee
Education Opportunities

Sunset Garden Club invites you to their January 16 meeting featuring ISU Horticulture professor Lisa Orgler at 6:30 pm. Meeting Address: Kirkman, Michael and Associates office at 11021 Aurora Avenue, Urbandale, IA 50322. (Directions: from 109th and Douglas go north to the intersection of 109th and Aurora. We are on the NW corner.) Social Time 6:30 PM, Business Meeting 6:50, Program 7 PM.

Seating is limited, please contact Shelley Bain at 279-8908 to RSVP if attending.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey today encouraged Iowans interested in beekeeping to consider enrolling in one of the beekeeping schools that will be held around the state again in 2016. There are a record number of 27 courses that will be held across the state for both the beginner and advanced bee keeper.

Early enrollment for many of these courses is important so courses can meet minimum enrollment numbers. Fees will vary by location. For more information, please refer to the IHPA website and online monthly newsletter at www.abuzzaboutbees.com or contact Andrew Joseph, State Apiarist with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, at (515) 725-1481 or andrew.joseph@iowaagriculture.gov.

Please note that not all of these courses are sponsored by the Iowa Honey Producers Association, and the information presented by the instructors is not necessarily endorsed by the IHPA. Additionally, none of the courses are sponsored by the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship and the information presented by the instructors is not necessarily endorsed by the Department.
More Education

Please note: we've learned that Winter webinar classes scheduled for Jan 14, 21 & 28 are only approximately 1.25 hours each. So we will show two on 1-14. For more information or to pre-register, email mfarlow@iastate.edu

[Image of Master Gardener 2016 Winter Webinar Series]

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.