Green Thumb
The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners
ISU Polk County Extension
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Sherri's View from the Garden

In February, our thoughts turn to the subjects of love and flowers. Red roses obviously symbolize romantic love, but what about other plants? In Victorian times, the bouquet was more about the message and less about the look, size, or quantity of the blooms. Here are a few ways to "say it with flowers": Daisies are equated with innocence, gardenias tell the recipient that the sender thinks she (or he) is lovely, gloxinia signifies love at first sight, and a spider mum says "Elope with me!" A bird of paradise symbolizes joyfulness, Bells of Ireland bring luck, mint conveys suspicion, daffodils herald new beginnings, and yellow carnations represent disdain and disappointment. This last one begs the question- If someone sends flowers meant to convey a negative emotion, isn't it still a net gain for the recipient? Even a "I Hate You" bouquet would make me happy. And the suitor sending the spider mums in this day and age had better include a card, lest the message of the flowers be lost on the would-be fiancé. So customize or scrutinize the next bouquet you send or receive. Happy Valentine's Day!

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Speaking of winter, nature, and love, this month's quotation comes from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll:

"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently. And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again."

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

Greenhouse

Work days begin 2-3-16 and continue every Wednesday and Saturday until after the Plant Sale. Our day begins at 9:00 AM and typically ends around 12:00 PM. Come when you can and leave when you must.

Our growing season can be interrupted by bad weather. Watch the runner at the bottom of the screen on television. If classes or activities at Des Moines public schools are cancelled, so are activities at the greenhouse.

If you're unsure, err on the side of safety.

Greenhouse co-chairs: Bob Helvey, Alda Helvey, Jean Schustek, and Cheryl Fridl
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 4pm at 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

We hope you are enjoying this quiet, snowy winter, maybe finding time to leaf through some favorite gardening magazines or indulge in a gardening class or two. With just one month to go before the March thaw, we're looking forward to the 2016 gardening season and joining folks back in the garden as weather permits. In the meantime, stay warm!

Co-Chairs, Ruth Doxon and Diane Ackerman

Discovery Garden

The Discovery Garden is covered with snow and enjoying a long winter nap, but Spring will be arriving soon and that means the Greenhouse will be open and ready for workers. The crew is in serious need of volunteers to water on Thursdays and Fridays in March and April. Please think about it and contact Jean Schustek if you think you can help with this matter.

Our fund raising and grant writing is ongoing and hopefully we will have some exciting news to report in March, at our Spring meeting. The date, time, and place will be decided soon and will be shared with all of you.

Stay warm, enjoy the snow, and Happy Valentine's Day

"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently?" Lewis Carroll

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Possible PCMG Garden and Art Fair, 2017

Looking for a different way to earn your volunteer hours? We are exploring the idea of a brand new fundraiser, a garden and art fair, for 2017, and could use your help!

This would be a public event, taking place on the grounds of one of our project gardens, and would feature selected vendors of nature- and garden-inspired art, garden accessories and specialty items, specialty plants, demonstrations and garden talks.

We are looking for a small group of volunteers to work on this project from the ground up - we will need help with logistics and publicity; securing a location; and finding and choosing vendors and demonstrators.

If you are interested in being a part of this effort, as a planner or as a vendor/demonstrator, contact Mary Howell-Williams: mhwphoto@gmail.com, or 515-556-3684.

Enabling Garden

By now, everyone is starting to get their seed catalogs in the mail, so you can spend some quality time planning your gardens. The same is true for the EG, although seeds have been log since ordered back in fall, the late winter is the perfect time to spend time planning for the Spring season so that we can hit the ground running.

We have a garden planning meeting set for Tuesday, February 23\textsuperscript{th} with a 6:00PM meeting start with a 5:30 social. Bring a snack to share, if you like. The meeting will be held at the Polk County Extension Offices in the windows Conference Room (first conference room on the right as you walk in). I know that everyone is looking forward to getting together with our garden pals from the past and making some new friends as well. Please join us for fun and fellowship!

We will be planning our first event of the year, The Enabling Garden Arbor Day Celebration. Matthew Bailey will be our feature speaker presenting on the concept of reducing our carbon footprint. Our celebration will be held on Saturday, April 30\textsuperscript{th} at 11:00 AM - 1:00PM in the Garden. There will be much more to come, as we get our committees formed and working to pull together a fun and educational session for all ages.

Please connect with us on our website www.enablinggardenpcmg.org or look us up on our Facebook page to see current pictures and activities that are going on at the Enabling Garden.

Hope to see you soon!

\textit{EG Co-Chairs: Sandie Hamilton, Paula Winslow, Christine Barker & Sharon Schoonover.}
2016 MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALE

The Master Gardener Plant Sale is the largest source of income for Polk County Master Gardener projects. Because of all of the expenses associated with getting our new Greenhouses up and running these last two years, and despite having the very best Plant Sale ever in 2015, we still need to replenish our reserve account to continue to cover our expenses for 2016 and subsequent years. So, it is essential that this year's sale be even BIGGER and BETTER than 2015, in fact a true BLOCKBUSTER. If this is to happen, we need the help and support of each and every one of you. Not only to come to the sale to purchase plants but also to donate as many garden related items as possible, give of your time as a Plant Sale volunteer and, of course, pass the word to all your friends and neighbors to come and shop till they drop.

VOLUNTEERS
It is not too early to sign up to volunteer at this year's Plant Sale. The Plant Sale Committee is using VolunteerSpot (the leading online Sign-up and reminder tool) to organize our upcoming Sign-ups. Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:
1) Click this link to see our Sign-Up on VolunteerSpot: http://vols.pt/PHEoeP
2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.
3) Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on VolunteerSpot.
Note: VolunteerSpot does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact Jen Jenkins at 864-1220 and she can sign you up manually.

There are 6 shifts available. The first is set-up day on Saturday, April 30 from 9am to noon and the second is set-up day on Wednesday, May 4 from 9am to noon.
Sale weekend includes Friday, May 6, 4:30pm to 7:15; two shifts on Saturday, May 7 from 7:30am to noon, and 11:45am to 4:15pm; and one shift on Sunday, May 8 from 11:30am to 4:15pm.

DONATIONS
It is also not too early to be thinking about what donations you can make to the sale. This part of the sale is pure profit and, in fact, accounted for approximately 30% of our total profits in 2015. So the more you donate, the more money we will make. Donations can be anything garden related, such as perennials, houseplants, planters, garden art, etc. If you have donations where you will need assistance just let us know and we will get you some help. This could be things like digging up and dividing perennials or picking up large donations. If you have any questions about donations please contact Isabella Hurless-Banks at imhurless@aol.com or call 278-2067.
There will be more information coming on donations as we get closer to the sale. NOTE: This year we do not need any books or magazines unless they are very recent.
SPECIAL REQUESTS
Our very own extremely talented Plant Sale Co-chair Jen Firzlaff donated some lovely hand painted gourds to the sale last year and they were a huge success. Jen is willing to do the same this year but is in need of gourds to paint. If anyone has any and would be willing to donate them that would be wonderful. Jen also has some great old windows that we could decorate and sell but we would need some help with this, so if you have any artistic talent and would be willing to help, we would love to work with you on this project.
We can also use light colored Levalour blinds which we cut up and use for plant stakes for our perennial donations.
The committee has also acquired some lovely small planters which we would like to use for houseplants. So if you have any plants at home that you could divide and get starts going that would be fantastic. The committee can supply you with the pots and the soil.
We also have some glass containers which could be made into terrariums. So if you have any experience in this area we would love to hear from you.

FACEBOOK
Follow us on facebook. Our page can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/PCMGPlantSale

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

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, Anastasia Tekippe, Nancy Eichmann, Lurae Zavalla, & Sandie Hamilton program committee
Community Events

There are two exciting events for local food leaders across the state of Iowa: Local Food Leaders Training and the Regional Food System Working Group Quarterly Meeting (RFSWG). These two events are happening back to back on February 3rd and 4th in Ames, Iowa at Design on Main.

The Regional Food System Working Group (RFSWG) brings together diverse individuals across the state of Iowa working to improve and connect key stakeholders in local food systems. Many are local food coordinators and lead coalitions for particular geographical locations. If you are unfamiliar with RFSWG - please check out this link: http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/regional-food-systems-working-group

The Local Food Leaders program workshop is being offered for all individuals interested in enhancing their food systems in a leadership role within their community. Experts from various different programs: local food systems, collective impact, leadership development, building trust, and work-life balance will speak about ways to incorporate these practices into your daily activities and coalitions. We are excited to be able to offer this program for FREE this year due to partnership with the Local Foods Team and Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension, and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE).

Registration is required for meal counts: (PLEASE REGISTER HERE) As we get closer to the event, you will receive additional directions regarding parking, space, etc.

Polk County is offering School Garden 101 Training Feb 9 - March 8 in the evenings in Des Moines and Ankeny. The curriculum was prepared by Susan DeBlieck and training will take place in ten counties this spring. The training is primarily a planning session for school staff teams to attend. Some of the schools participating already have vegetable gardens, others want to start a garden this season.

I'd like to offer three potential options for Master Gardeners:
1) If you'd like to be a garden expert for one of the school teams, consider joining us March 1 for that evening's planning session. You can get information from Andrea in advance on what schools are participating to help determine if there are any schools near your home.
2) If you'd like to serve as a helper, topics are:
   - compost and red worms on Feb 9
   - soils on Feb 16
   - seeding and transplanting on Feb 23
3) If you attend any of the evening sessions, you can receive MG education hours.
Contact Andrea Nelson at 515.957.5775 or nelsonar@iastate.edu if you are interested.
Education Opportunities
Wow, lots of options this winter /spring

Calling all gardeners and nature lovers!

Make sure to mark your calendar for the new Cabin Fever Gardening Series which will be held at the Winterset Library meeting room on Feb. 6, 13, and 20 at 10:00 a.m.

On Feb. 6, Jim Nelson and Deena Howell will present "Starting From Seed."
On Feb. 13, Wanda Lunn will present her wonderful program on growing true lilies in Iowa.
On Feb. 20, Jessie Lowry from Blank Park Zoo will present "Plant.Grow.Fly."

This gardening series is free and open to the public. For more details, click here.
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Beginning Beekeeping Class with Julia McGuire

Class runs a total of 8 hours, divided into two Saturday mornings of 4 hours each: 2/20 and 2/27/16. The class will use the state apiarist's powerpoint as a backbone and take breaks.

Beginning Beekeeping, ISU Extension, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Suite A, Altoona, Iowa 50009 515.957.5760 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM on 2/20 and 2/27
$50 tuition. Students should own or purchase the text book, First Lessons in Beekeeping, for $8 from the instructor at the first meeting.

Here is the URL for registration: http://juliecache.com/beginning-beekeeping-class
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Tree Steward Class

Tuesday Evenings February 23 - March 29  6:30-8:30 PM Roosevelt High School, Room #1830  4419 Center St, Des Moines, IA 50312  For more details, contact Tree Des Moines at http://treedesmoines.com/index.html

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The Green Yard Makeover

Jordan Schiebel, a Grinnell area Community Supported Agriculture farmer, will be leading a free 3 session workshop series in Grinnell.

All classes in the series will be held from 6:30-8:30 pm, on Tuesdays, Feb. 16, March 1, and March 15. For a description of the workshops and enrollment information click here.
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More Education

Think Spring! Garden Seminar
Saturday, February 27 9:00 am - 3:00 pm (Registration begins at 8:30 am)

Join Indianola Parks and Recreation and the Warren County Master Gardeners for a day filled with inspiring speakers, door prizes, time to shop in the garden marketplace plus a delicious catered lunch. Master Gardeners earn 4 CEU credits.

- Melissa Peterson, Garden Center Manager at Ted Lare Design Build & Garden Center will share inspirational photos of garden art and Pinterest garden projects that will leave you motivated and ready for spring.
- Karen Johlas-Szalkowski is the Naturalist II at Warren County Conservation. She will teach how to attract birds, butterflies and pollinators to your backyard.
- Aaron Steil, Assistant Director at Reiman Gardens, will share how to have success with house plants.
- Learn all about the Kentucky CoffeeTree from Andy Schmitz, the Director of Horticulture at Brenton Arboretum.

The event will be held at the Kent Campus Center at Simpson College, Indianola. Cost is $45 which includes lunch. Preregistration is required no later than Wednesday, February 17, and seating is limited. Register online at https://online.activecommunities.com/Indianola/Activities/ActivitiesCourseDetails.asp?aid=697&cid=9189 or call Indianola Parks & Recreation at 515-961-9420. More information can be found at http://indianolaiowa.gov/calendar.aspx?EID=3292.

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Iowa Trees, Shrubs, Prairie Plants and Sustainable Landscapes
Landscape Design Refresher Symposium
The Iowa Arboretum, Madrid, Iowa
February 27, 2016 For registration, click here.

The April 7-8, 2016 Gardening Study School has been approved by National Garden Clubs, Inc. at the Iowa Arboretum. You may sign up now through March, but if you plan to attend, I'm asking you to register early. If I do not get enough registrations soon enough, I have to consider canceling it. For the agenda and registration form, click here.

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