March is an exciting time for gardeners! The wondrous transition from winter to spring happens before our eyes. Here are ten tasks to get you back into the swing of gardening this month:

1) Start annuals, such as zinnias and marigolds, from seed, indoors under lights.
2) Prune dead or damaged branches from trees and shrubs.
3) Start your vegetable garden by planting potatoes, peas, lettuce, carrots, and radishes.
4) Late in the month, plant pansies.
5) Tie last year's ornamental grasses in a bundle and cut to a height of few inches with a serrated bread knife.
6) Begin feeding houseplants again, and spray them with water to remove dust, prevent spider mites, and add humidity.
7) Plant tubers and tender bulbs, such as gladiolas, lilies, and dahlias, and to ensure continuous blooming, continue to plant on a two-week schedule until mid-June.
8) Clean out birdhouses so they'll be ready for feathered tenants this spring.
9) Wake up your roses by removing winter protection, fertilizing, pruning, and watering.
10) Fertilize spring bulbs, such as tulips and daffodils, as soon as a flower stalk begins to emerge from the foliage, using special bulb fertilizer or a complete 20-20-20 variety.

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This month's quotation comes from Charles Dickens in "Great Expectations", and captures the essence of the month:

"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade."

Enjoy all the seasons of March!

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

Call for Artists for 2016 All-Iowa Master Gardener's Art Show

Be part of the fifth annual Master Gardener's Art Show. Entering the show is open to all Iowa Master Gardeners. The exhibition will be held at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, beginning with a reception on Thursday, September 1, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Applications are being accepted now through August 1, 2016. Entries must have a horticultural, floriculture, or gardening theme and must have been completed within the last 3 years. In addition to Best of Category designation, selected art work will be exhibited at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden's North Gallery from September 1 through November 16. Free standing art pieces may be entered in the Art Show, but it is not possible to display free standing objects in the North Gallery; these entries will be represented in a photo collage. Selections for art to be hung in the gallery will be based on Botanical Garden criteria for exhibits and selection will be part of the judging process.

Awards will be presented at the Art Show Reception open to the public, friends, and family at the Botanical Garden's Swartz and Walsh rooms on Thursday, September 1, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

If not selected to hang in the North Gallery, art needs to be picked up September 1, 7:30 p.m. at the Botanical Garden. If selected to be hung in the North Gallery, art needs to be picked up on November 17.

Categories
Drawing, Painting, Photography, Mixed Media, Fiber/Leather/Basketry, Ceramic, Metal, Glass, and Repurposed for Garden Art.

If an individual artist wishes to apply in more than one category, a separate application will need to be submitted for each piece of art work. Up to 3 entries can be made per category. Mail completed application(s) to Pat Reeves by August 1, 2016. Questions - contact Pat at patriciareeves2@gmail.com

Please check out the categories and enter the Art Show. The application is at this [link]. Please bring your friends and family to the Art Show Reception. Some pieces will be for sale.

Greenhouse

For those of you whose GPS system couldn't find the greenhouse, there's a reason. You were given the wrong address because we were given the wrong address. The correct address of the greenhouse is 1427 34th Avenue SW, Altoona, IA 50009.

We will gladly take any pots, labels, plant sticks, etc. that people want to return to the greenhouse. Work days are in full force. Wednesday and Saturday from 9:00 AM until we're done. Master Gardeners only. Wear your name badge. See you there.

Greenhouse co-chairs: Bob Helvey, Alda Helvey, Jean Schustek, and Cheryl Fridl
Bus Tours 2016

Our one day tour will be on Saturday, June 4th. We will be heading to western Iowa to visit America's first aronia berry farm - Sawmill Hollow - in a beautiful Loess Hills setting. Visits to nurseries and private gardens in that part of the state will round out our visit.

We are heading to Minneapolis for our overnight tour. The trip dates are July 22 to July 24th. On our last visit to Minneapolis, many of us fell in love with Tangletown Gardens nursery and the owners' fabulous private gardens. For the visit in July, we will be joining the Tangletown Gardens' Garden and Art Tour. This is an annual event featuring some of the Twin Cities' best private gardens and local art. What a great opportunity to see some very cool private gardens with local art work on display in the gardens! We can't go to Minneapolis without spending some time at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. With 1,137 acres of natural areas and public garden areas it is hard to see everything the garden has to offer in one visit. We will be staying right next to the Mall of America and we have scheduled one free evening for those who want to explore the mall.

More details on each trip will be available in next month's newsletter.

Laurie Barrick, BARRICK8792@msn.com

Demonstration Garden

It may still be winter, but that hasn't stopped a few daffodils and crocuses from poking through what's left of the snow. And that's a sure sign that it's time to gear up for the gardening season. The Demo Garden is looking forward to a number of exciting new projects in 2016: We'll be adding a row of blueberries to our berry patch, converting to organic methods for orchard maintenance, and adding a birdbath fountain to the central plaza area. In addition, a Little Free Library is on its way, so be sure to set aside any good books you may want to share this summer.

The annual Orchard Pruning Labs for interns are scheduled to take place at the Demo Garden on Saturday, March 19 at 9 am, Wednesday, March 23rd at 1 pm, and Saturday, March 26 at 9 am. This year we need to do a lot of pruning in the orchard so we will be having a third lab. Once the interns select their lab date, available slots will be offered and open to all master gardeners. A limited amount of pruning equipment is on hand, so you are encouraged to bring pruners, pruning saws, and even ladders if you have them. This could be a great way to get a start on your volunteer hours for this year.

Our annual Spring Planning Meeting will take place on Monday, March 28, at 6:30 pm, at the Urbandale Public Library. Anyone with an interest in participating in the Demo Garden is welcome to attend. Hope to see you there!

Co-Chairs, Ruth Doxon and Diane Ackerman
Discovery Garden

There is not too much to report this month except the planning meeting which is to be held on Wednesday, March 9th, beginning at 6 pm. It will be held at the Grand View Golf Course club house. RSVP to Jean Roe ljroe@q.com or discoverygardenpcmg@gmail.com. There will be lots of information to share, especially about the renovations to the Garden.

Bob & Alda will gladly take any pots, labels, plant sticks, etc. that people want to return to the greenhouse if you bring them to our March meeting.

"Winter is on my head but eternal Spring is in my heart" Victor Hugo

Co-Chairs:
Dean Brand drbrand@mediacombb.net  tel:515-360-0774,
Jean Roe ljroe@q.com  tel:515.205.8706
Patrick Schmitt schmittpatrickj@gmail.com  tel:515.279.9645,
Cheree Tilton tiltncm@gmail.com  tel:515.262.0488

Enabling Garden

We had a meeting in February to continue our planning for our Arbor Day Celebration and the spring season. The celebration will be held on Saturday, April 30 at 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM in the Garden. As mentioned in February Green Thumb, Matthew Bailey will be our featured speaker presenting on the concept of reducing our carbon footprint. As is our tradition, we will be featuring a flag raising ceremony with a local Scouts troop, an Arbor Day Proclamation from the mayor of Altoona and of course we will have local children's group providing a program about gardening and trees. Our committee members are working with several key vendors and local groups to pull together a fun and educational session for all ages!

In conjunction with our Arbor Day Celebration, we will be giving away tree free seedlings. Through the generosity of a true tree enthusiast, we have been provided 250 seedlings. Varieties include Aroniaberry, Hazelnut, Wild Plum, Shagbark Hickory and Serviceberry. This is an awesome opportunity to get a nice tree seedling and come out and attend the Arbor Day celebration.

Our next planning meeting is set for Tuesday, March 22nd with a with a 5:30 PM social, 6 PM meeting start. The meeting will be held at the Polk County Extension Offices in the Windows Conference room A. Please join us for fun and fellowship.

Other dates to mark on your calendar:
- Saturday April 16 - Garden Clean-up
- Saturday, April 23 - Garden Clean-up
- Tuesday, April 26 - First work night of the season

Our work nights are Tuesday nights starting around 5:00 PM, weather permitting. Plan ahead and come join the fun, working and socializing in the garden.

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

Please Sign Up!

Do you want to spend a half day in a beautiful garden and earn four volunteer hours? The PCMG Garden Tour is Saturday, June 25 and is a marquee event for PCMG. Volunteers are needed to help host the event at each garden. There is a morning and an afternoon shift in each garden with two volunteers per shift. You will be asked to greet guests and relay information provided to you by the host. You can sign up with a friend. Signing up is easy. We're using VolunteerSpot to organize our 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/JhMitH](http://vols.pt/JhMitH)
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. You will receive a confirmation and reminder email.

VolunteerSpot does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact Jan Jordan at jejordan@q.com to sign up manually.
See you in the gardens!

*Jan Jordan, Garden tour volunteers, jejordan@q.com*

Background Checks

Back in November 2015, a request was sent by email and USPS mail for you to return forms needed to allow us to request a background check on all PCMG. So far, 200 of you have done so, thanks.

If you haven't done that yet, please watch your regular mailbox in March for a fresh set of the forms and more information about what we need to do before the Sept. 30, 2016 deadline.

Directory Updates

New email addresses:
Peg Goetzke = msgoetzke@gmail.com
Roger Erpelding = rogererpel@gmail.com
Connie Rider = rider2901@gmail.com
Kaci Rother = rother2@q.com

Joyce Carle is now at 901 SE Laurie Ln, Ankeny, IA 50021

**Iowa State University**

Extension and Outreach

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

If you are interested in working the Plant Sale, and I know you are, it is not too early to sign up to volunteer. So please go to VolunteerSpot (see the link below) so that you can chose the time that works best for you.

**VOLUNTEERS**
The Plant Sale Committee is using VolunteerSpot (the leading online Sign-up and reminder tool) to organize our upcoming sign-ups.
Check February Green Thumb for 3 easy steps:
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.

**DONATIONS**
If you are considering donating house plants, please contact Isabella Hurless-Banks at imhurless@aol.com or call 278-2067 with information on which plants you will have. This will help us to avoid having too many of one kind. In this case variety is truly the spice of life.

**SPECIAL REQUESTS**
**GOURDS:** 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.
**ARTISTS:** 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.
**BLINDS:** We can also use light colored Levalour blinds which we cut up and use for plant stakes for our perennial donations.
**HOUSE PLANTS:** 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.
**TERRARIUMS:** 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.
**CARDBOARD FLATS:** We have a source to obtain cardboard flats but last year they were unable to supply as many as they had in the past. So on your travels if you have the opportunity to pick some up for use at the sale please do so.

*If you can contribute or help in any of these areas please contact Isabella to coordinate.*

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

I’m getting a lot of requests right now for speakers to talk to small groups about the MG program and gardening in general. If you can help, please send me the days and times of your availability and topics you are comfortable presenting.

Lovejoy Elementary, on Des Moines’ south side, has recently started a Garden & Beautification Team! We are planning to update our landscaping, create an outdoor reading area, & build a community garden. We are looking for individuals interested in volunteering with our team, assisting in community clean-up days, & working with our students and teachers. Individuals interested in volunteering can contact Bobbie Jo Sheridan, Community School Coordinator, at bobbie.sheridan@dmschools.org or 515.242.8416.

The Food Bank of Iowa is interested in starting an onsite garden in response to wanting to expand our Fresh Produce Program. If anyone would be interested in volunteering their time to for the new on-site garden, please contact Lauryn Kappel at 515-564-0330 or lkappel@foodbankiowa.org.

Forest Avenue Outreach is creating a new 'community garden' for low income individuals that utilize the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry. This will be a container bucket community garden. Each plot will consist of 3-4 buckets that each grower will take home.

Finally, our goal is that all the growers will be in the 50314 zip code, specifically between 2nd ave and MLK (east to west) and University and the DSM River (south to north). One of our outcomes is for the 2016 growers to each mentor a new grower in 2017.

We are looking for up to 10 individuals to mentor/teach low income growers at their homes, twice a week (May through September) for a total of 10 visits. If anyone is interested, they can contact Ralph Chiodo, 515-991-2665 or www.forestaveoutreach.com.

Polk County 2016 Winter Program Continues!

Join us this Thursday, March 3rd at 6:30 pm for the program (two education hours) Presenter: Lorin Knapp, Author. life-long gardener, and lover of wildlife. Two Topics: "Incorporating Native Plants into Your Landscape" and "Attracting Butterflies to Your Garden"

Can you join us for dinner? There is no cost to enjoy some made-from-scratch beef and vegetable stew before the program at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday! You are welcome to bring something to share—but there is no obligation to do so.

Thursday, April 7th Our Program begins at 6:30 p.m. (two education hours) Details are still be refined but rest assured that this will be a fun evening of hands-on learning and social time with your garden friends!

Paula Winslow, Anastasia Tekippe, Nancy Eichmann, Lurae Zavalla, & Sandie Hamilton
Education Opportunities

So many people have enrolled in The Green Yard Makeover classes (from 6:30-8:30 pm, on Tuesdays, Feb. 16, March 1, and March 15) that we have had to move them to a new location where we do not have space limitations. The classes will now be held at Grinnell Friends Church, not the Ahrens Foundation Building as we had earlier advertised. For more details, click here.

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

Become a TreeKeeper!
Training held on:
Tuesday, April 5, 12 & 19, 2016 * 6 - 9 p.m.
Ding Darling Shelter, 2100 Saylor Road, Des Moines
Cost is $30 and includes a light dinner, an official Trees Forever TreeKeepers handbook and t-shirt. For more details, contact Leslie Berckes at 515-681-2295 lberckes@treesforever.org

The Greater Des Moines Garden Club invites you to their March 24, 2016 meeting at 1:00 pm featuring Doug Harr, president of Iowa Audubon to present on how to attract birds to your yard as well as how to retain them, nesting options, habitat and identification. Meeting Address: Plymouth Congregational Church Waveland Room (second floor), 4126 Ingersoll, Des Moines. We will start with the program followed by social time and brief business meeting ending by 3:00 pm. Please contact Beth Muenchrath at 254-2936 if attending.

2016 morel mushroom certification workshops: March 26, April 9 and April 16
To sell morel mushrooms in Iowa, you must complete a certification workshop. Iowa State University is offering a 3-hour certification workshop on identifying morels and false morels. Certification lasts for 3 years. NOTE: Iowans who have not certified for 3 or more years must re-certify this year. All three 2016 morel certification workshops will be held on the ISU campus from 1 to 4 pm (Saturdays) March 26, April 9, April 16. Room 191, Seed Science Building, Northwest corner of Wallace Road and Osborn Drive, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
PREREGISTRATION: If you plan to attend one of the workshops, please email or call Mark Gleason (see contacts below) by Monday, March 21. Please indicate which of the 3 workshops you plan to attend. This is important so that we can plan space and materials in the training venue accordingly.
WORKSHOP FEE $50 per person for first-time registration, payable at the training. Cash or check accepted; no credit cards.
CONTACT Mark Gleason (phone: 515-294-0579; email: mgleason@iastate.edu

The April. 7-8, 2016 Gardening Study School has been approved by National Garden Clubs, Inc. at the Iowa Arboretum. For the agenda and registration form, click here.