Green Thumb
The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners

Plant Sale

We are only 5-6 weeks away from our 2016 Plant Sale and while we are making great progress there is still much to do to if we are to build on and exceed our 2015 success. For that 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 family to come and shop till they drop. To those who have already volunteered and/or made donations, thanks so much.

VOLUNTEERS
We still have lots of great spots left for all of our shifts. The Plant Sale Committee is using Volunteer Spot 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 up up manually.

There are 4 shifts available over the sale weekend. They are Friday, May 6, 4:30 to 7:15; two shifts on Saturday, May 7 from 7:30 am to noon and 11:45 to 4:15 pm; and one shift on Sunday, May 8 from 11:30am to 4:15pm.

Note: If you are signed up as a helper for any of the Plant Sale shifts and are interested in working as a checker (prior experience not necessary but helpful/training will be provided) please contact Jen Jenkins via email at jenhj@live.com.

DONATIONS
The donations that you make to the sale are pure profits 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 yo 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.

Note: The Plant Sale Committee has plant markers for use with all perennial donations. These will be available from any of the plant sale co-chairs as well as at the Greenhouse. By using these tags with a fine point permanent marker we can ensure that they hold up under the wet and humid conditions at the greenhouse. Tags will have approximately an inch marked of at the top and this area needs to remain blank and is for use by the Plant Sale only. There will still be plenty of space for you to identify your donations. Plant name, color, height and light conditions are all useful information to include. Do NOT price your donations.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD
Print and display the poster for family, friends and co-workers to see. Watch your email for a This & That next week with a link to the printable poster. Follow us on facebook. It can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/PCMGPlantSale

Plant Sale Chairs Jen Jenkins, Isabella Hurless-Banks, and Jen Firzlaff
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

The Grimes Walmart has donated several bags of compost they can't sell because the bags are torn. Garden co-chairs are aware of its availability. This is the second year they've done this and just like we attempted last year, the Walmart has asked we be available on April 30 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM to answer questions from their customers and to tell them about the Master Gardener program. Weather stopped us from doing it last year. If you can spare an hour that afternoon, please let me know (bob@tsmcgrp.com) as well as which hour, 1:00 PM, 2:00 PM or 3:00 PM, so we can schedule it. Thank you in advance for your help.

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

PLEASE REGISTER SOON FOR OUR ONE DAY TRIP to be held 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. We will round out the trip with a visit to a beautiful private garden, tour the indoor production facility at Red Oak Greenhouse, and shop at Sherbondy's Nursery (highly recommended by our private garden owner). The registration form for the trip will be available on the PCMG website starting April 5th.

SAVE THE DATE: 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 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. The registration form for this trip will be available later in April.

*Laurie Barrick, BARRICK8792@msn.com*

**Demonstration Garden**

The pruning labs held at the Demo Garden were a great success this year. The trees and shrubs look better than they have in a long time. Thank you to everyone who participated - your teamwork truly shines through. We want to specially thank Jerry Ferrell, who again this year led the education component of the sessions and shared his expertise in pruning techniques. A special shout-out to Marcia Leeper and her team for restoring the espalier, and to Tony Christensen and John Westfall for assisting Jerry in coaching the interns and Master Gardener volunteers. For those of you who haven't had enough pruning, there are still a few fruit trees that could use some work. Talk to Ruth Doxon if you would like to lend a hand with that. Our next official event will be the Spring Cleanup on Saturday, April 23, beginning at 9 a.m. We invite everyone who can to come out and help us wake up the garden. Regular work nights at the Demo Garden are Mondays, beginning May 9th and throughout the summer, and Thursdays beginning May 12th until classes start on June 16th. Start time is 5 p.m., or whenever you can get there.

*Co-Chairs, Ruth Doxon and Diane Ackerman*
Garden Tour

A few more volunteers are needed for the PCMG Garden Tour Saturday, June 25 and to help the garden hosts get their beautiful gardens in tiptop shape. More volunteer spots have been added for each of the eight gardens in the western suburbs of Des Moines. You will be asked to greet guests and relay information provided to you by the host. Volunteers will be able to take the tour by charter bus on Saturday June 18. We only ask that you contribute a small gratuity for the bus driver. Signing up on line is easy.
1) Click this link to see our Sign-up on VolunteerSpot: http://vols.pt/JhMitH
2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.
3) You will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on VolunteerSpot. You will receive a confirmation and reminder email.
We also need garden helpers to volunteer to help the hosts prepare. If you can help in this way prior to the tour, please contact Jan Jordan at jejordan@q.com. See you in the Garden!

Jan Jordan, Garden Tour volunteer, jejordan@q.com

Discovery Garden

In case some of you have not heard our good news, we have received enough grant money to go ahead with our renovation project, and we want to have it completed before all of the planting takes place. When all of this starts, we will notify everyone, because the garden will be a construction zone and off limits for a week or two. The State Fair is going to replace the sidewalk leading from the south entrance of the Ag Building, that should also be completed before planting begins.

In the meantime, the pond needs to be cleaned and prepared for the warm season, that date is Saturday, April 23rd, and garden cleanup is scheduled for Wednesday, April 20th. There should be a dumpster behind the Ag Building so none of the garden debris goes to the curb, please remember this. These cleanup dates will be dependent on the weather, it can rain or snow in April, as we all know.

We had a GREAT turnout at our March dinner meeting, so we hope you are all eager to start gardening using the new pathway and remodeled gazebo.

Plant pick up, from the Greenhouse, has not yet been determined, but we will notify everyone as soon as we know.

Happy Spring

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 tiltoncm@gmail.com tel:515.262.0488
Enabling Garden

It is time to start getting the garden into Spring shape! Mark your calendars for the following dates (weather permitting):

- Saturday April 16th - Garden Clean-up
- Saturday, April 23rd - Garden Clean-up
- Tuesday, April 26th - 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.

Our Annual Arbor Day Celebration is planned for Saturday April 30th at 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM rain, shine, cold or wind! (in the event of nasty weather, we will move the program to the Extension Office). The day will kick-off with a flag raising ceremony with a local scout troop. Then Skip Conkling, Altoona Mayor, will be on hand to deliver the Arbor Day Proclamation. Our feature speaker will be Matthew Bailey, who will be speaking about how to reduce our carbon footprint. We will have several knowledgeable vendors at the event to talk about tree and garden topics. A local Altoona 5th Grade Class will be presenting poems and art about trees. Our ever-popular kid's events once again include Spin-n-Win tree trivia as well making a fun postcard for kids to mail out about their Arbor Day at the EG. We will have a tree planting demonstration. As always, we will have a nice line-up of door prizes as well as the seedling giveaway that includes Aroniaberry, Hazelnut, Wild Plum, Shagbark Hickory and Serviceberry varieties. Bring the kids and join the fun!

We hope to see everyone in the EG soon.

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

Polk County 2016 Winter Program Continues!

Spring Awakening! The PCMG 2016 Season Preview Event
Join your fellow gardeners for hands-on learning activities, hear highlights of 2016 events, and earn a some education credit*!

- Thursday, April 7th
- Potluck-please bring a dish to share
- Fun & Philanthropy - please bring a donation for the food pantry
- Timeline - 6:00 to 8:30
- Pre-register-by email to education.dates4PCMG@gmail.com
- Pre-register-by phone to Ike (Nancy) 957-5760

*Portions of the program will be eligible for educational credit. Some of the presentations may qualify for volunteer time.

Paula Winslow, Anastasia Tekippe, Nancy Eichmann, Lurae Zavalla, & Sandie Hamilton
Farmers' Market

In a little more than a month the 2015 Des Moines Downtown Farmers' Market season will begin! Our very own PCMG Booth will be open for business at the Market on the third Saturday of each month, May through September.

The PCMG Booth is staffed by volunteer Master Gardeners who answer gardening questions from passersby (we keep the ISU reference materials handy). We also provide Market patrons with access to gardening reference literature from ISU and related sources, as well as free seeds (thanks Bob and Alda!). We also use the Booth as a forum to provide special information on a monthly gardening topic of our choosing. Our May topic will be Planning Your Vegetable and Flower Beds.

This year, our third Saturday dates are: May 21, June 18, July 19, July 16, August 20 and September 17. We staff the booth in two multi-person shifts each Saturday (6:45 - 9:45 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.), so you are never answering questions alone. Look for further details on the PCMG Farmers' Market Booth as the season progresses.

For now what you need to know is that WE NEED VOLUNTEER MASTER GARDENERS to staff our booth! It is a fun and educational way to earn service hours (but Mary says no ed credit-sorry guys). And remember, Farmers' Market food is only paces away. To volunteer to work one or more shifts this season, click here http://vols.pt/aZny8Y

Community Requests

In Lutheran Services of Iowa community garden program would like volunteers to connect with people of refugee status. Contact Daniel Bowser, Community Garden Associate, Refugee Community Services 3200 University Avenue | Des Moines, Iowa 50311 Phone: 515-271-7307 Daniel.Bowser@lsiowa.org

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.

William Brown is a Prevention Specialist with Employee & Family Resources in Des Moines. His focus is on creating and implementing community-based education projects regarding drug/alcohol abuse, healthy decision making, healthy communication, and deepening connections within the community. He has a very strong interest in creating (or working with an already established) a community garden program that would incorporate education about the above mentioned topics. Contact William at wbrown@EFR.ORG or 515-471-2351 if you can assist.

The Food Bank of Iowa seeks assistance in creating gardening education programs. Master Gardeners would assist in developing curriculum, educating staff and volunteers, and guiding logistics of the creation of a large vegetable garden at the Food Bank's Des Moines distribution center. Short-term and long-term volunteering opportunities are available. To get involved, contact Lauryn Kappel at 515-564-0330 or lkappel@foodbankiowa.org
Education Opportunities

Piney Ridge Greenhouse is offering classes on various topics, days, and times from April 9 to May 15th at 6355 NW 51st St., Johnston, IA 50131. All classes are free but space is limited so please call ahead to reserve your spot. 515-276-9554 Click here for full details.

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Become a TreeKeeper!

Training held on:
Tuesdays, 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

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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.
"What do you mean, 'April is the cruelest month'?" my sixteen-year-old self shouted at Mr. Killian in high school poetry class. He tried to explain T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" to me then, and Google gave it a try moments ago, but I still don't get it. Something about loss and despair, written in almost perfect iambic meter, in what's considered to be the most influential poem of the twentieth century. To me, April has always been the most magical of months. Shrubs that appear long dead come to life, buds on the trees gracefully unfurl, and tulips and daffodils poke through the soil and seem to grow before our eyes. What was dreary brown a few days before is now a lovely spring green. To me, April never fails to inspire a sense of wonder. So with apologies to T.S. Eliot and Mr. Killian, April is not the cruelest month. We may not all have the soul of a poet, but we have something even better - the soul of a gardener. ~Happy April!

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

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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

Polk County Master Gardeners, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Suite A, Altoona, IA 50009