Green Thumb
The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners
December 2014
ISU Polk County Extension
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Matt's Missive

The English Christmas carol, "In the Bleak Midwinter" is an incredibly moving hymn with a powerful winter image:

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our winter Solstice is just a few weeks away. The gardens sleep. While all of us welcome the break from gardening tasks, there are ways that we can continue to garden, even in Iowa's bleak midwinter. In fact, we can garden now in ways that are especially appropriate to the Season. We can garden with Faith, Hope, Charity and Light.

A garden is an act of Faith, and we can still garden with Faith. Faith that the cold, ice and snow won't last. Faith that trees and shrubs will sprout in spring. Faith that our perennials will return, along with sunshine and warmth.

A garden requires Hope, and we can still garden with Hope. Hope that the bulbs we planted a few weeks ago sit in the ground at the right depth. Hope that the seeds we order will be as productive and disease resistant as the catalogs promise. Hope that timely rains and sunny days will come as we need them.

A garden also involves Charity. Perhaps divided perennials that you exchange with neighbors, extra vegetables that you grow for the food pantry, or bouquets that you share with friends. And we can still garden with Charity, especially at this time of year. Consider making a donation to the Polk County Master Gardener Greenhouse fund or to one of our Master Gardener teaching gardens. A memorial donation in honor of a friend or relative might be the perfect holiday gift for someone who loves to see things grow. And if you itemize deductions, a PCMG donation now will reduce your personal income taxes next spring. One thing is sure—any donation you make to PCMG will help our gardening mission grow well in the coming year.

Last, but not least, a garden needs Light. And we can still garden with Light. My garden is in Beaverdale, and it's really bright during the holidays, with lights on the eaves of my house, on the branches of evergreen trees and shrubs, and along the tops of the fences. Two of my neighbors (both Master Gardeners) light up large Fir and Spruce trees so brightly that people stop and pose for photos in front of them. If you are conservation-minded, as most gardeners are, newer LED lights offer low-energy options for lighting up your house and garden.

So forget about taking time off from gardening! 'Tis the Season! - The Season for gardening with Faith, Hope, Charity and Light! ~~ Matt

Matthew Dore, Steering Committee Chair, matt.dore@drake.edu
Demonstration Garden

The annual cleanup on November 1st took place without a hitch. The mercury said it was cold, but the sun warmed us to the point of peeling off hats and outer layers as the work progressed. Three weeks later, when the roses were put to bed, the weather again favored us with temperatures warming into the 40s. Thanks to everyone who turned out to pull the last of the annuals, dig bulbs, and tidy up the shed, and to those who welcomed one last chance to pull on a pair of gloves and winterize the roses. It’s amazing how much was accomplished in a few short hours on each of those days, thanks to so many gardeners pitching in, and how great the garden looks going into winter. Well done!

In this season of giving thanks, it’s a perfect time to express our heartfelt gratitude to Margaret Spikes for her many years of service as chair of the Demonstration Garden. Under her careful eye, the garden has blossomed into a destination and source of pride for the local community, as well as a place where master gardeners come together to share their talents, ideas, and friendship. As winter closes in and planning for next year gets underway, we’re grateful that Margaret will still be on hand to mentor new leadership.

Speaking of next year, watch this space and This & That for announcements about upcoming meetings and opportunities for involvement in the Demonstration Garden. With your ideas and talent, 2015 will most certainly be a year of growth and change (hopefully all good).

Enjoy the Holidays and stay warm!

Co-chairs-in-training:
Diane Ackerman fridafolks@aol.com
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Discovery Garden

Happy Holidays from our garden to your gardens and good health and happiness in 2015.

Co-Chairs:
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ISU Master Gardener Newsletter

If you are not already on the list, go to http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/news.html, open the latest edition and find the "join our list" link on the left side. This will send you news of MG events around the state each month.
**Enabling Garden**

As it is every year, 2014 was a busy year at the Enabling Garden, and here are a couple of the accomplishments from this year:

- Arbor Day Celebration
- Hosted five different classes during our Season of Learning
- Installment of the beautiful South Garden with a gorgeous arbor, hardscaping and a conifer garden.

Additionally, our volunteers have been very diligent about soliciting donations for the Children’s Garden. On November 18, the Children's Garden project received $1,000 from the Nippy Hippie 5K Run sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Swain Chiropractic. Pictured below are Kari Swain, Connie Nikkel, and Mattia Hansen, President of the Chamber.

The Children's Garden project also received a grant award of $1,000 from Bankers Trust in Altoona. Pictured below are Mary Simon, Connie Nikkel, Marlene Olson, and Andrea Nelson, Executive Director of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

The Enabling Garden volunteers are very grateful for the generous monetary awards and support from Bankers Trust and the Altoona Chamber of Commerce.

We want to give a shout out to everyone who participated in the Enabling Garden this year. From volunteering for planting, pulling weeds, watering, donating baked goods, to bringing treats on a weekly basis, coordinating our publicity, actively fundraising, *all of these contributions are what makes a volunteer organization work!*

We are looking forward to a fantastic 2015 season. Thank you and have a blessed season.

**EG Co-Chairs: Christine Barker, Sandie Hamilton, & Sharon Schoonover**
Gardeners' Show House

The Holidays are here, and so is the Show House train! It travels on three levels, through four very beautiful landscapes, and past hundreds of really special plants. It will be up until early January - so make plans to see it.

As you know, the Show House ends as an MG project at the end of the month. I would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to everyone who has been a part of it. It has been an honor to work with you all. We’ve had plenty of fun, and made lots of new friends. Many, many visitors to the Botanical Garden will remember our work for a long time. It will be sad to say goodbye, but we are leaving it in good hands.

Blessings to all of you in 2015!

Contact Mary Howell-Williams 556-3684 mhwphoto@mchsi.com
Greenhouse

We have set the dates for the 2015 Greenhouse Lab at 1/24/15, 1/28/15, and 1/31/15. Next year we will need 10 education hours to recertify. The lab provides two of those hours. We have 96 slots over the three days and mandatory attendance for 43 Interns. That leaves 53 slots that can be filled by PCMG and then Interns from Warren-Madison-Dallas counties. If you want to attend one of the labs send me an email (bob@tsmcgrp.com) prioritizing your date availability. Don't omit a date. If you are unavailable any of those dates indicate that in your email. The cutoff date to apply is 12-15-14.

We need a forklift! In January, L&G Products will be delivering five pallets of soil. That's a lot of bags. If someone has a forklift or knows of someone who will let us use one for about one hour, let me know at bob@tsmcgrp.com. The date is flexible as long as it's a weekday and we complete by 1-24-15. If we don't find a forklift, we'll need a lot of people to move over 200 bags of soil from the truck to the greenhouse.

The greenhouse will be open for business on February 4"th, 2015. Our day begins at 9:00 and ends when we complete that day's chores. You can start and leave any time you need. Remember, in 2015 you'll need 20 volunteer hours to recertify. When you arrive, check in with the Captain for that day for a task. The Captains by month are: February - Alda Helvey, March - Jerry Ferrell, April - Sherry Swihart, and May - Bob Helvey. Work days at the greenhouse are open to Polk County Master Gardeners only. Do not bring anyone with you. If you do, you'll politely be asked to leave.

We will be needing volunteers to water on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each month this year. February we need two people each day, March we need three, April and May we need four. In 2014 a key was left in the Victorian Acres office giving easy access to anyone who knew about it, which may be a factor in the disappearance of plants, pots, tools, and supplies. For 2015 the watering periods will be scheduled so someone with a key can give access to all the volunteers at the same time. The time may differ for each day depending on the availability of the person with the key. If you're interested in volunteering please send an email to bob@tsmcgrp.com with the day(s) and month(s) you want to volunteer.

Alda & Bob Helvey (o) 515-224-6424 bob@tsmcgrp.com

Directory changes

Yes, even the latest directory needs an update. Deanna Gilbert has a new email - elliesmom66@gmail.com

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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

No January Green Thumb

As you may have read in a This & That email, I'm going to take some time off in December. Since there is no January intern class and ALL of you will have reported your hours in the next week or so, (hint,hint) it just seems like a good time to use up some vacation time and hibernate. You can expect a February newsletter on the first or second. Mary Farlow

Happy Holidays Everyone