Green Thumb  
The Newsletter for the  
Polk County Master Gardeners  
April 2015  

ISU Extension and Outreach - Polk County  
1625 Adventureland Drive, Ste A, Altoona, Iowa 50009  
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Matt's Missive

T.S. Eliot's epic poem, The Waste Land, notes the following about this time of year:

April is the cruelest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.

Many in the Midwest might say, "Well, that's different!" But there is plenty of truth to Eliot's observations.

April is a time of considerable change in central Iowa, at least as far as the weather goes, and growing things begin to respond. Although the average low and high temperatures for the month-41 and 62, respectively-appear ideal for plants, things can start out slowly, since the average low and high temperatures at the beginning of the month are well below the average low and high temperatures at month-end-56 and 67. There is considerable change in sun exposure as well as April progresses. We enjoy just over half a day of sunlight on April 1 (12.5 hours) and nearly 14 hours of sunlight on April 30. As for the spring rain Eliot mentions, April is the fifth wettest month of the year in the Des Moines metro, with an average of 3.86 inches of precipitation.

But changeable weather or not, it is now Spring, and a middle-aged gardener's thoughts turn to ... the million and one things that need to be done in the garden-and all at once it seems! I struggle with attention deficit disorder this time of year, never sure whether it's more important to rake the thatch out of the lawn, prune the roses, muck out the pond, or get the lettuce and peas planted. I usually jump back and forth from one task to the other, depending on what's catching my eye at the time, and rarely make much progress completing any of them. Somehow, it all gets done by mid-May.

Try to make room in your own garden calendars for things you should plant now-like radishes, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, as well as lettuce, spinach, collards and kale. It's also time to plant onion seeds and sets, peas, carrots, beets and chard. And who can forget potatoes-traditionally planted on Good Friday. Our ground has now thawed quite a bit, so you should be able to get that tiller or shovel in the dirt. And please don't forget to put out some pansies. They should be good until at least June!

As for your responsibilities to our Polk Master Gardener Collective, don't forget that all of our community gardens are now getting organized for the growing season-see the newsletter items below. The Greenhouse is in full swing as well, so if you can spare a Wednesday or Saturday, please stop by and help.

Finally, remember to gather your spare gardening items-magazines, books, or garden art-and donate them, as well as your extra perennials, to the Plant Sale. The Plant Sale Committee will also need your help organizing, assembling, and pricing items before the sale, and working the sale itself. This is the Polk County Master Gardeners' biggest annual fundraiser and a critical source for our budget, so please help as you can.

Matthew Dore, Steering Committee Chair, matt.dore@drake.edu
Here are a couple of temporary detours that will get you to our office while I-80 Exit 142 eastbound off-ramp (orange highlighted ramp) is closed from now until May 21.

**Project Previews**

April 16 will be our annual look at what is happening this season on PCMG projects. Plant Sale committee will show us the newest varieties available at the sale. The Garden Tour committee will give us a peak at the area for this June tour.

We'll meet at the Extension office (don't forget about the exit 141 detour) at 6:30. Feel free to bring treats to share.

**Demonstration Garden**

Spring has sprung at the demonstration garden! Already this year, we have seen the installation of several new pathways constructed from a variety of materials. In conjunction with the hardscaping, the food pantry garden is being reconfigured from its former circular shape to a rectangle and fencing is being added to keep the critters away from the veggies.

Special thanks to all you interns who came out to the pruning labs in March - the orchard and shrubs are looking so much tidier thanks to you!

We'll be sprucing up the rest of the garden at our annual spring cleanup on Saturday, April 25th, from 9 a.m. to noon. All are welcome!

Co-chairs in training:
- **Diane Ackerman** fridafolks@aol.com
- **Ruth Doxon** rdoxon@gmail.com
- **Susan Travis** eagles.wind@gmail.com

**ISU Master Gardener Newsletter**

If you are not already on the list, go to [http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/news.html](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.
**Discovery Garden**

Spring has finally arrived, the tulips and daffodils are pushing their way out of the ground, birds are singing, and the grass is turning green. Spring has arrived at the Discovery Garden also. Our spring planning meeting was held on March 18th, and everyone in attendance, was excited about starting another gardening year.

Reports from the Green House are promising with lots of germination and transplanting taking place. Our gratitude to Alda and Bob Helvey, their crews and interns that make our projects possible.

Discovery Garden clean up dates are:
Saturday April 18th, pond clean up and
Wednesday April 29th will be garden cleaning.
This is all subject to change if Mother Nature sends us downpours or even worse, snow. Ugh.

"Earth laughs in flowers" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Co-Chairs:**
Dean Brand drbrand@mediacombb.net ph.: 515-360-0774
Jean Roe ljroe@q.com ph.: 515-205-8706
Patrick Schmitt schmittpatrickj@gmail.com ph.: 515-279-9645
Cheree Tilton titoncm@gmail.com ph: 515-262-0488

**Art Show**

Be part of the fourth annual Master Gardener's Art Show. New this year, 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 Monday, August 31, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Applications are being accepted now through August 1, 2015. 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 Monday, August 31, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

If not selected to hang in the North Gallery, art needs to be picked up August 31, 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, 2015. 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.

Chair: Patricia Reeves patriciareeves2@gmail.com
Enabling Garden

Our final planning meeting to prep for the Arbor Day Celebration as well as our 2015 season will be held at the Polk County Extension office and is set for Thursday, April 2, 5:30PM Social and 6:00PM in the Windows Conference room. Please come and help us plan for what is shaping up to be another great year of growing at the Enabling Garden.

On that note, it is time to start getting the garden into Spring shape! Our planned garden clean-up dates (weather permitting):

- Saturday, April 11\textsuperscript{th} at 12:00PM
- Saturday, April 18\textsuperscript{th} at 12:00PM.
- Tuesday, April 21\textsuperscript{st} any time after 5:00PM

Tuesdays are our regular work nights at the Enabling Garden which are set to begin on Tuesday, April 21\textsuperscript{st} and will continue on Tuesday nights starting any time after 5:00PM, weather permitting. Please join us for fellowship, fun and food!

Last but certainly not least, our Annual Arbor Day Celebration is planned for Saturday April 25\textsuperscript{th} at 11:00AM - 1:00 PM rain, shine, cold or wind! We will start out the events 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. We will have many different vendors at the event to talk about tree and garden topics. Some vendors will have products available for sale at the event. Our feature talk on trees will be by Steve Hanson, Tree enthusiast, will be followed by a tree planting demonstration. Our popular kid's events once again include Spin-n-Win tree trivia and making natural bird feeders. As always, we will have a nice line-up of door prizes. Bring the kids and join the fun! We will also have a bake sale to bring a few bucks and take home some goodies.

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

Greenhouse

April is a busy month at the Greenhouse. We're no more than six weeks away from supplying plants to the Plant Sale and all of our projects. That means we have lots of transplanting, reseeding, watering, and inventory work to do. Many of you have joined us and we appreciate your help. If you haven't volunteered at the greenhouse this year, please do. Those who have joined us at the greenhouse, please continue. How can you pass on the treats!! No need to reach out to us, just be there.

The greenhouse needs watering cans. If you have an extra one, please bring it to the greenhouse. Thanks

Co-Chairs: Alda & Bob Helvey 515-224-6424 bob@tsmgrp.com
Bus Trips

Registrations are open for our one day trip to Hazelton, Iowa on Saturday, May 30! Please access the registration form through the Polk County Master Gardener website. Our trip to Northeast Iowa is a unique opportunity to visit an Amish community where our host will be providing a home-cooked meal in her home, letting us shop in her nursery and arranging visits to private gardens in the area. Before we get to Hazelton we will be visiting Gary Wittenbaugh's private garden - where it is a real treat to see 900 plants (including 325 conifers) thriving on his 50 foot residential lot. We must have your check and reservation form to hold a spot on the tour.

Save the date for our trip to St. Louis on August 7 to 9. The highlight of this trip will be a visit to the Missouri Botanic Gardens. More details to come when the registration form is available.

Chair: Laurie Barrick barrick8792@msn.com

Garden Tour

Remember to tell your friends, family, and fellow plant hoarders about the Garden Tour. Word of mouth is the most effective means of publicity...and it’s free! Every ticket sold increases the funding for all PCMG projects for 2016.

2015 Garden Tour, Saturday, June 20, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rain or Shine

This year’s tour winds along the Des Moines River Valley and includes gardens in the rural Polk City, western Ankeny and Lower Beaver Neighborhood.

Tickets are $15 each and go on sale June 1 at:
Earl May Garden Centers (all Polk County locations plus Waukee), Goode Greenhouses, Herndon's Des Moines Seed & Nursery, and The Woodsmith Store Garden Center

Volunteer Opportunities:

Garden Prep -
Help the tour gardeners prepare their gardens for tour day. We already have a request to help mulch as soon as the snow is gone. To sign up, email kwinter32@mchsi.com your name, your home phone number and your cell phone number. Be sure to put "GARDEN PREP" in the email subject line. You will receive an email with possible work days/times as the tour gardeners request help.

Poster Hangers -
Help publicize the PCMG Garden Tour by hanging posters in the windows of 10 Polk County businesses of your choice. Choose dates and times that suit your schedule... but plan to hang the posters between May 20 and May 27. To sign up, email your contact info to: mbrown@bsbdesign.com. You will receive an email in May with details about when and where to pick up the Garden Tour posters.

Tour Day Volunteer -
Sign up at VolunteerSpot.com using this link: http://vols.pt/RRZrCR
Tour Day Volunteers greet tour attendees and answer gardening questions during the PCMG Garden Tour on June 20. Two shifts are available: 8:30am-12:30pm or Noon-4:00pm. Volunteer Training will be held on June 13.

2016 Garden Tour Chair -
2015 will be my last garden tour serving as the chair. The committee is a great group of MGs and the tour is always fun to organize. If you would like to serve as 2016 garden tour chair, or join the committee, email mwalkedesign@mac.com.

Michelle Walke, Garden Tour Chair
Master Gardener Plant Sale 2015

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 last year, we are having to dig deeply into our reserve account to cover our expenses for 2015. So, it is essential that this year’s sale be our biggest and best ever, in fact a true BLOCKBUSTER. For that to happen we need the help and support of each and every one of you. We need you to come to the sale not only 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. To those of you who have already volunteered and/or made donations, thanks so much.

VOLUNTEERS
It is not too early to sign up to volunteer at this year’s Plant Sale. Some of you have already done so but we still need lots more help.

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/vPijw
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 306-5352 and she can sign you up manually.

There are 5 shifts available. The first is set-up day on Saturday, April 25 from 9am to noon. Sale weekend includes Friday, May 1, 5pm to 7:15; two shifts on Saturday, May 2 from 7:30am to noon, and 11:45am to 4:15pm; and Sunday, May 3 from 11:30am to 4:15pm.

DONATIONS
It is also not too early to be thinking about what donations you can make. Some folks have already made donations but we have room for many more. This part of the sale is pure profit so the more you donate, the more money we will make. Donations can be anything garden related, such as perennials, houseplants, books and magazines, planters, garden art etc. If you have donations that you will need assistance with, 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. The committee has acquired some lovely small colorful planters which we would like to use for houseplants. So if you have any plants at home that you could divide and get started going that would be wonderful. The committee can then pot them up before the sale. 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.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD
Print and display the poster for family, friends and co-workers to see. Click here.

Follow us on facebook. (Our facebook page is a work in progress!) It can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/PCMGPlantSale

Plant Sale Chairs: Jen Jenkins 422-8947, Isabella Hurless-Banks 278-2067, and Joy Trueblood 473-2638
Community Requests

Volunteer Opportunity to Reduce Food Insecurity in Polk County!
The Altoona Community Garden opened in the Spring of 2014. It contains 42 garden plots and is located in the SW corner of Lions Park, 507 13th Avenue SW, in Altoona.

There are two sizes of plots that local residents can rent for the season. Two large and four small plots are dedicated to planting for community giving. Produce is to be donated to local food pantries including the Altoona Caring Hands Food Bank and the Altoona Senior Meal Center.

The community is seeking volunteers willing to adopt the community giving plots, plant, care for, and donate the produce. There are a some funds available from last year’s fundraising to purchase seeds or plants for the giving plots, but volunteers need to be prepared to fund the cost of planting. No rental is charged for these plots. Tilling and water are provided to all of the gardens and there is an on-site tool shed with some supplies for use by in the garden plot by volunteers and plot renters.

- Large garden plots are 15 ft. x 6 ft.
- Small garden plots are 6 ft. x 6 ft.

The community garden is one of the initiatives of the Healthy Altoona Partnership, an all volunteer group organized in 2013. Information on the community gardens and how to adopt a plot is on the Partnership’s blog: http://healthyaltoona.com/community-garden/

April 25 If you would like to assist with the Earth Day Celebration at Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens, contact Susan Cory scory@dmbotanicalgarden.com or 323-6293.

DMACC would like offer Gardening Continuing Education Classes and would like to hear from individuals interested in teaching a very basic gardening classes, something that you can do in your own backyard, perhaps container/box gardening. Contact Jill Whitson, MPH, Continuing Education Coordinator, 515-256-4907 or jwhitson@dmacc.edu

I have requests from other groups similar to DMACC’s. If this is something you're comfortable with, please let me know at mfarlow@iastate.edu. I'll need to know if you are available days or evenings or both and what topics you would like to offer.

Planting day at Terrace Hill Mansion, 2300 Grand Ave, is May 8th. Planting starts at 9 AM - stay for the number of hours that is convenient for you. Please bring your gardening tools. Lunch will be served. Please send me an email if you are able to help. Thanks! Theresa Garrison tdgarrison61@q.com

Upcoming Education Opportunities

April 2
11:30 am to 1:00 pm
Iowa State University Extension Polk County Master Gardener Mark White will give a presentation of growing vegetables in collaboration with the City of Des Moines, Des Moines Community Action Agency, and the Des Moines Public Library. As space is limited, please register online.

April 2 Blank Park Zoo: On the Front Lines of Monarch Butterfly Conservation
6:00 to 9:00 pm
Location: Science Center of Iowa, 401 W Martin Luther King Jr Pkwy, Des Moines, Iowa
Contact: Jessie Lowry, Conservation Manager, Blank Park Zoo, 515-974-2612, jrlowry@blankparkzoo.net
Registration: Registration costs $15 for members, $20 for non-member, or $10 for students. Tickets can be purchase online.
**April 9** Marcia Leeper, former Corporate Gardener at Garden Gate Magazine and gardener extraordinaire, will present a program on "Unusual vegetables in the garden" on Thursday, April 9 at 7 p.m. This free program is open to the public and will be held at the Johnston Lions Club, Merle Hay and NW 64th Place. You're invited to a social time at 6:30 to meet Marcia. For additional information, please contact Judy Anderson at 278-0939 or andersnjudy@mchsi.com

**April 7, 14 & 21**
6:00 to 9:00 pm
Become a TreeKeeper!
Make a difference in your neighborhood and community
Ding Darling Shelter, 2100 Saylor Road, Des Moines, IA
Cost is $30 and includes a light dinner, an official Trees Forever TreeKeepers handbook and t-shirt.
Hands-on and classroom training:
Tree species ID and benefits, Proper planting techniques, Tree maintenance, Trees Forever TreeKeepers:
Assist in local tree plantings, Help to care for and maintain young trees, Provide a voice for trees in our community
To Register: [http://www.treesforever.org/treekeepers](http://www.treesforever.org/treekeepers) by April 3
Questions: Contact Leslie Berckes at 515-681-2295 or e-mail, LBerckes@treesforever.org
www.treesforever.org
Sponsored by Trees Forever in partnership with the City of Des Moines

**April 9 & 10**
FEDERATED GARDEN CLUBS OF IOWA SERIES 11 - GARDENING STUDY COURSE I,
IOWA ARBORETUM, MADRID, IOWA
APRIL 9-10, 2015
Open to the Public

RECOMMENDED READING: THE NATIONAL GARDENER magazine 1-800-550-6007.
Master Gardeners may be awarded 1 hour CEU for each 1 hour class time. Agenda and details on the mail-in registration form

**April 16** will be our annual look at what is happening this season on PCMG projects.
We'll meet at the Extension office (don't forget about the exit 141 detour) at 6:30. Feel free to bring treats to share.

**May 1** Growing Farm to School in Iowa Through Partnerships
More details thru This & That in April.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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

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