



The Green Thumb

Monthly News and Updates for Polk County Master Gardeners



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Message Regarding COVID-19

ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County is working to adhere to local, state and national recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Our priority is the

health and safety of our staff, volunteers and program participants. All in-person meetings have been postponed, cancelled or put online through May 9th. Staff are working remotely and practicing social distancing. The [Polk County Extension office](#) is also closed to the public until further notice.

Regarding Master Gardener events and meetings, we are working to comply with the recommendations from John Lawrence, Vice President for Extension and Outreach. The full letter from Dr. Lawrence [can be found here](#).

1. Meetings & Events

- a. All in-person meetings & events are to be cancelled through May 9th (with a possible extension)
- b. Individuals 65 and older should avoid contact with other people (CDC).
- c. You may want to host workshops and MG meetings online. Please work with your MG county coordinator to set this up.

2. Volunteer Projects

- a. As you consider whether to maintain a Master Gardener volunteer garden site, please consider the safety of the MG volunteers, Extension staff and the public. In some cases, some projects won't happen or will be scaled back this year. This is a good time to consider focusing on fewer projects that are done well.
- b. All projects must follow guidelines based on recommendations from the CDC:
 - i. Keep the number of volunteers working in the garden to a minimum (less than 10 people)
 - ii. Ensure social distancing and practice frequent hand-washing. Stay home if you are sick.
 - iii. Use [approved cleaners](#) for shared surfaces, such as tools, hose spigots, or hose handles.

Individual PCMG projects are working to comply with the above guidelines, please see project articles for specific details and event cancellations. **As this situation is continuously unfolding, guidelines from Iowa State University, and ISU Extension and Outreach may be updated in the future.** Information will be made available via the [Polk County Extension website](#), and notices affecting Master Gardeners will be sent via newsletter.

Thank you for the adjustments you are making to Master Gardener projects, and your flexibility in adapting to the current situation. Your health and safety is our top priority, and we hope you stay well as we navigate this public health crisis.

During this time it is important to have access to timely and accurate information. For additional information and updates on the outbreak of COVID-19, view the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) web-pages. For updates on Iowa State University's response, [view this page](#).

Message from the Steering Committee Chair

Hello All -

Given that our world has changed dramatically since the last Green Thumb was published, I wanted to make sure there was plenty of space to report important updates related to COVID-19 . The upswing of the public health crisis has forced people to shelter-in-place and isolate or self-quarantine themselves. These activities could take longer than originally thought. Take care of your families, friends, and yourselves, both physically and mentally.

Soon we will be back to our gardens, but until then stay safe and healthy,

Christine Barker
Steering Committee Chair

Polk County Master Gardeners

Garden Tour

PCMG Garden Tour Postponed until 2021

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, the Polk County Master Gardeners Tour has been postponed until 2021. We plan to highlight the Urbandale, West Des Moines and Clive area again next year. The exact date will be announced later.

Thank you to all the Master Gardeners who have been working tirelessly on this project for the past year. I would especially like to extend a special thank you to Jodie Hand, former chair and Kathy Cole, co-chair for their excellent leadership and vision.

We will be back in touch to continue planning soon. In the meantime continue to enjoy our host gardens on the PCMG Garden tour website PCMGTOUR.COM

-Jean Samson



extraordinary
gardens
by ordinary people

Contact:

Co-Chairs:

Jean Samson
515-669-3054

Kathy Cole
515-468-0766

Garden Tour Website
Facebook Page



Program Committee

Chair: [Mary Poulter](#)

Thank you so much to the 62 who attended Adam Steil's wonderful presentation on Gardening Under Lights and information on Reiman Gardens. A special thanks to the following volunteers for donating soup: very tasty!

- Linda Wilkinson: vegetable soup
- Dean Brand: vegetable beef soup
- Bonnie McCaughey: sausage and kale soup
- Marlene Anderson: Portuguese soup

We were saddened to cancel the April 2nd event, but save the date for the Harvest Celebration which will be held **Tuesday, Oct. 27th**. Marcia Leeper will provide her educational presentation, and we will also honor new Master Gardeners and awards recipients.

If you'd like to view notes from Aaron Steil's presentation, [visit this page](#).



Contact

Chair:
[Laurie Barrick](#)

2020 Bus Trips

We are doing some positive thinking and hoping that we can go ahead with our one day bus trip to **Cedar Rapids on July 25th!** [The registration form is on the Polk County Master Gardener website.](#) We are excited to have a nice mix of private and public gardens for this trip - along with some great shopping opportunities! More details about the trip are included in the registration form. Please send in your form now to hold your spot on the bus!

Questions? Please contact [Laurie Barrick](#).



Downtown Farmers' Market

We aren't sure when the Des Moines Downtown Farmers' Market will start this year, so we'll wait to start scheduling volunteers until we get this year's dates confirmed. Once the Market announces a start date, we'll let you know which Saturdays we'll be there (likely the 3rd Saturday of each month). As in prior years, we will organize a Signup.com page for you to volunteer for shifts at the Market.

Contact

Co-Chairs:

[Matt Dore](#)

[Sherri Soich](#)

[Randy Campbell](#)

Demonstration Garden

Spring is a time of ever changing weather. This season is complicated with the arrival of the new coronavirus. All plans, schedules and events for the coming season are being modified weekly if not daily.

Spring Clean Up has moved to Plan B. Volunteers may enter the garden to clean out wintry plant debris, **however, please follow all guidelines. Sanitize and keep a social distance.** Within our storage shed you will find sanitizing wipes, hand soap and a small bucket for washing your hands (the water has been turned on). There is also spray alcohol for disinfecting blades and handles. We suggest you bring your own tools and if Demo's supply is utilized, please sanitize them before returning them to their proper place. If you have any questions please contact a co-chair. We can share information regarding access and suggested spring clean up tasks during the month of April. Dried materials and branches should be cut up or broken to fit in curb compost bins (pack them tightly). Watch for emails regarding special project (creation of a holding bed, laying sod, etc.)

On a brighter note than the virus spreading throughout the country our early transplants are

Co-chairs:

[Ruth Doxon](#)

(515) 253-9115

[Sandie Sydnes](#)

(515) 276-1497

Visit our [website](#) and like us on [Facebook](#).



thriving. Our volunteer sowers have had rather good germination rates and once transplants are moved to our rented greenhouse space they immediately take note of real light. Plans for getting transplants into the ground in May will be made closer to that window of time.

Be safe, stay healthy.



Discovery Garden

A Hidden Gem

Hi all,

Hope this writing finds you all doing well and practicing your social distancing skills. Hopefully with the advent of spring, we can all get back to normal activities whatever that may mean. Since we cancelled our Spring Dinner Meeting, we wanted to summarize some of our springtime activities which are **subject to change depending on the weather as well as the current situation.**



At this point the Fairgrounds are locked so you may want to check ahead before visiting the garden anytime soon.



Due to Covid-19 please keep gatherings smaller than 10. Activities in the garden are subject to change.

**Thursday, August 13
through Sunday, August
23, 2020 - 2020
Iowa State Fair**

With a new year we want to welcome 14 new members to our DG family. Please make sure we all are introducing ourselves and welcoming these new team members in the sharing of our common bond of gardening and learning.

Contact:

Co-chairs:

[Dean Brand](#)
(515) 360-0774
[Joyce Carle](#)
(515) 229-6769
[Jean Roe](#)
(515) 205-8706
[Patrick Schmitt](#)

The DG is doing well financially, with \$40,623.00 in our grant account and \$8,301.64 in our Capital Improvement account thanks to the diligent efforts of our co-chairs and Nancy Bodine who has worked so hard the past years in research and applying for grants as well as other donation streams. Please remember that it behooves all of us to support and seek out new revenue activities that allow us to keep progressing with our project. Over the past years we have made many improvements at the DG and want to continue in that mode in the years to come. If you are affiliated in your work environment or any

(515) 657-1937

[View our website](#)
[join our Facebook group.](#)

organization that matches funding or gives outright gifts, please share that with our co-chairs or better yet seek out any and all donations that will keep us fiscally in good shape for years to come.

We want to expound on the use of the To Do list posted on the bulletin board in the barn as well as the new White Board located on the outside of the barn in the bullpen area. Posted will be any kind of activities that people can do on their own time if they have time to share outside of our normal Wednesday evening work nights.

This year we are adding some new permanent plant materials barring any delivery issues to include:

- New tree in the Shade Bed
- New Shrub in the Childrens Bed
- Two new hydrangeas in the bed south of the tunnel
- Four new hydrangeas in the Hydrangea and Shade Structure Bed

Other planned improvements:

- New Fence between the Childrens and AAS Bed
- Planned painting of the barn in case anyone wants to volunteer
- Finalizing the purchase and donation of a new bench from the family and friends of Marilyn Moon in honor of her mother
- Pathway installer is planning to donate a top coat application on our current pathway sometime this spring.
- We plan to continue with our new larger permanent labels to include the Perennial Bed this year.
- Please remember that improvements come from all our suggestions. Your input is important to help define future activities.

Key dates for Springtime and Summer:

These dates may change barring weather conditions as well as other conditions beyond our control. Please follow social distancing guidelines above if participating.

- **4/25** Pond Cleanup, 8:00 a.m..
 - Please bring boots and gloves and any tools you may want to use. Any questions,

or interest in participating, contact Dean Brand

- **4/29** Garden Cleanup with an alternative date of 5/6.
 - All garden refuse needs to be placed on a pile on the east side of the Ag Building
- **5/20** Plant delivery to the garden from Isle of Green and the City of Des Moines.
- **5/20** Plant date
 - alternative date of 5/27
- **6/3-6/6** Pork Expo. Fairgrounds will be off limits without a special pass
- **CANCELED - 6/20** MG Garden Tour.
- **6/18-6/27** Jr. High National Rodeo Finals.
 - We will have access to the grounds which may be congested with that activity
- **7/3-7/5** Good Guys Car Show.
 - Fairgrounds will be off limits without a special pass
- **7/1-7/5.** State Fair Shift Signup begins for DG members only
- **7/6** State Fair Shift signup begins for Master Gardeners
- **7/20** Tentative Garden Tour with Jefferson Garden Club.
 - Please make sure beds are well groomed
- **7/23** Tentative Garden Tour with Des Moines Garden Club.
 - Please make sure beds are well groomed
- **Early August**, please make sure your beds are fair ready with all weeding and deadheading completed.
- **8/5** Pre Fair Celebration and Potluck @ 6:00
- **8/9** Last Day for vehicle entry onto the fairgrounds before the fair without a special pass
- **8/13 to 8/23** Iowa State Fair
- **8/24** A good rest is needed by all.

Enabling Garden



Due to the current status of the pandemic, we have decided to cancel the 2020 Spring perennial plant sale. Apologize for any inconvenience. The

Co-chairs:

team will evaluate the possibility of rescheduling the perennial sale. Stay tuned to the Green Thumb for more details.

[Rosie Surber](#)
[Judy Goshorn](#)
[Paul Satre](#)
[Christine Barker](#)

We have had a small team of busy volunteers out getting some fresh air cleaning up the garden while maintaining a minimum of 6 foot of social distancing. Many thanks to this team of dedicated individuals who see what needs to be done and takes care of garden business!

Visit our [website](#) and connect with us on our [Facebook Group](#).

In light of the continued changes with public health, please ensure that you are checking our Facebook page for updates on these 2020 schedule events.

- **CANCELLED** April 18 (Saturday) noon - 3:00PM - Enabling Garden Perennial Plant Sale
- **CANCELLED** April 25 and May 5 (Saturdays) - 1:00PM Spring Clean-up
- **PENDING - further direction to be provided** - May 12th (Tuesday) - 4:00PM First work night at the Garden
- **PENDING - further direction to be provided** - May 19 (Tuesday) - 6:30PM Speaker Mamta Israni to present on "Mother Nature's Medicines"



Everyone hang in there. Keep yourselves safe and healthy, as we hope to see you in the garden this summer!

Continuing Education Opportunities

Looking for education opportunities you can do from home as you practice social distancing? Below are some options you can do right from your couch:

Check out the Iowa Master Gardener Youtube channel:

[Give Your Garden Wings](#) - 1 hour

[Gardening Season FAQ](#) - 1 hour

[Ecology Plus Diversity](#) - 1 hour

[Limited Space Gardening](#) - 1 hour

[Managing Vegetable Pests](#) - 1 hour

[Compost 101 and Growing Roses](#) - 1.75 hours

[Local Bees and Organic Vegetables](#) - 1.75 hours

[From Seed to Table](#) - 1.5 hours

[Garden Helpers](#) - 1.25 hours

[Food Security Partners](#) - 1.25 hours

[Landscaping for Wildlife](#) - 1.25 hours

[Gardening with Youth](#) - 1 hour
[Urban Tree Selection](#) - 1.25 hours

NEW 2020 Winter Webcasts

These webcasts were played at the Urbandale Library earlier this year, but subsequent sessions at the Forest Ave. Library were cancelled. Therefore, we've made the videos available through these private links:

[Iowa Weather](#)
[Bring Kids in the Garden](#)
[Explore the Ada Hayden Herbarium](#)

After April 2nd, these will be publicly available through the [Iowa Master Gardener Youtube](#) page as well.

Other sources for online education:

[School Garden Support Organization Network](#) - many archived webinars
Updates from the [Garden Ecology Lab](#) through Oregon State University
Extension
[Iowa Learning Farms](#) - many archived webinars
[Pollinator Champions online course](#) - can count for up to 6 hours of education

This list is not all-encompassing. Many other Extension programs may have online content that can be counted for continuing education. If it is research-based, it can count for Master Gardener continuing education hours. Not sure if something qualifies? Feel free to [email Kalsa](#).

Here is a list of things that do not count as continuing education hours - watching television or movies, listening to radio programs, and reading books. Read more in the Iowa MG Volunteer Manual here: extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/for-volunteers

ISU Extension and Outreach has many resources that can help you and your family navigate this unprecedented time. Check out our [monthly Polk County Extension newsletter](#) for a place to start.

About

Polk County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources programs aim to help all Iowans, from the home hobbyist to the ag professional, make informed decisions

through research-based education. Some programs and focus areas include farm management education, technical expertise for crops, livestock and pests, as well as our Polk County Master Gardener volunteer program; our signature horticulture education program. Our work supports clean water and healthy habitats, profitable farms, and a more secure food system.



Contact

Kalsa Parker Browning
Natural Resources Program Coordinator
ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County
(515) 957-5768
kparker@iastate.edu



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