



# 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.

### **Volunteer guidance in PCMG Gardens:**

As the gardens begin to allow more than 10 volunteers at a time, the number of volunteers and other members of the public in PCMG gardens should be limited to the amount with which social distancing guidelines of at least 6 feet between persons can be maintained.

Volunteers should also be practicing these personal prevention methods:

- Ensuring you are maintaining 6 feet of distance between yourself and others
- Frequent handwashing or use of hand sanitizer if a handwashing station is not readily available.
- Wearing a face covering is encouraged at all times, and especially when maintaining 6 ft. social distance is unrealistic
- Staying home if you someone in your household is sick
- Using [approved cleaners](#) for shared surfaces, such as tools, hose spigots, or hose handles.
- Avoid sharing objects when possible

People who are at higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19 should consider staying home and limiting contact with others. Those populations include older individuals (over the age of 65) or with underlying health conditions. To view a list of higher risk populations, [view the CDC website.](#)

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### **Food at gatherings:**

**No prepared food can be served, sold or provided by staff, volunteers or participants at any county extension hosted program or activity regardless of the program or activity location.** Prepared food examples include: prepared food fundraisers, food stands selling prepared food, and activities such as barbecues, potlucks, etc. Individually pre-packaged food (ex. individually wrapped granola bars, bottles of water) can be provided.

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Polk County Master Gardeners are expected to adhere to the above as well as [CDC guidance](#) on considerations for gatherings such as work nights.

In-person public events in such as lecture series, plant sales, or other events are highly discouraged. You may want to host workshops and MG meetings online. Please work with the MG coordinator to set this up.

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As projects send communications about upcoming opportunities, a reminder that participating in Master Gardener volunteer opportunities is not obligatory at any time. **While some garden activities continue on a small scale, and within guidelines placed by our local health department, ISU, and ISU Extension, we**

**recognize that you may not feel comfortable participating in any activity during the current situation, and that is accepted.** The health and safety of our volunteers and participants remains our highest priority during this time. If you have concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact Kalsa Parker Browning, the contact for the Polk County Master Gardener program at [kparker@iastate.edu](mailto:kparker@iastate.edu) or 515-401-6068, or Paul Gibbins, Regional Director for Polk County Extension at [pgibbins@iastate.edu](mailto:pgibbins@iastate.edu) or 515-229-9182.

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## Message from the Steering Committee Chair

Hello All and Happy Summer to you all. For all practical purposes this has been a summer in a holding pattern: Farmers Markets, Festivals and of course the Iowa State Fair have all been postponed or in a holding pattern. The one thing that continues are the seasons and the hot weather has arrived and along with that, I hope that your first tomatoes are coming on and you will be soon enjoying peppers and any other fruits of your labor. Take pleasure in the hot and humid weather of August, as we know, fall will be here all too soon. In the meantime, Matt Dore is the focus of our Spotlight Interview this month. Enjoy!,

--Christine



**Christine: What first piqued your interest in gardening? And, how did you make your way to the Master Gardener program?**

**Matt:** Like a lot of Master Gardeners, I grew up in a house where growing flowers and vegetables was part of the routine. I learned a lot through watching and helping my dad, who was the primary gardener in our family. He's nearly 98 years old, and he still enjoys reports on the progress of our garden each year. When I was in High School, my Biology teacher encouraged students to grow vegetable gardens for extra credit. Once I created my own garden for that purpose, I was hooked!

As soon as my wife and I bought our first home in Austin, Texas in the mid-80s, I began re-landscaping the yard. That project started all over again when we re-located to Des Moines in 1992. After almost 30 years, our Beaverdale garden is finally beginning to shape up, but I still see room for improvement almost everywhere I look. That's the next 30 years, I guess.

Several Beaverdale MGs suggested that I pursue a Master Gardener certification, and I was ultimately persuaded to do so by neighbors who took the classes with me in 2012. One of those neighbors, Sherri Soich, ended up on the Master Gardener Garden Tour that year along with me. It was sink or swim for both of us, but that experience helped us settle into the Master Gardener program.

**Christine: Do you prefer Vegetables or Flowers (or neither!).**

**Matt:** There are more flowers in our garden than anything else, but I don't think I'll ever give up my vegetable patch. I love summer tomatoes and herbs too much to do that.

**Christine: When you are in the garden, what brings a smile to your face?**

**Matt:** Any perennial that blooms nicely in the heat of the summer. Black-Eyed Susans come to mind!

**Christine: What do you want others to take away from the Master Gardener Program?**

**Matt:** While I learned a lot in the Master Gardener classes, I still find that gardening is mostly trial and error, and probably more error than anything else. The best gardening tips come from fellow MGs, who are generally quite willing to suggest new plants and to share their own trials and errors from the garden. The Farmers' Market project, which I help chair, is a great way to meet other MGs for that purpose. I'm looking forward to the post-COVID day when our project re-launches and I can connect with those volunteers again.

**Christine Barker**  
**Steering Committee Chair**



## Call for Master Gardener Mentors!

The Master Gardener Training this fall has been converted to virtual. To give trainees the experience of meeting current MGs and to get them out in the gardens, you are invited to participate as a mentor to someone in the class!

### What the mentor role entails:

- Meeting with your mentee(s) (1 or 2 trainees), once or twice this fall in one of our gardens - ex. for a work night, a mutual time that works to show them around the garden, or to work on your bed, this is up to you!
- Sending Kalsa an email indicating your interest, and what gardens you typically frequent so you can be connected with a trainee who wants to volunteer in that project



All social distancing, mask wearing, and general Covid guidance would be in place for these meetings (as is for any work night/gathering in the gardens), so know that your comfort and safety comes first. **If you are interested in this opportunity this fall please contact Kalsa at [kparker@iastate.edu](mailto:kparker@iastate.edu).**

## Plant Photos

We are considering a Master Gardener-wide plant sale next spring. If you have perennial plants that you would consider donating to this sale, please take some photos while they are in bloom! This will help us showcase what mature plants look like to buyers.

Please note: this is a notification to photograph your own plants if you are potentially interested in participating in the sale, photos **do not** need to be sent anywhere at this time, nor is a commitment needed to participate in the sale.



## Downtown Farmers' Market

We are still on hold regarding the opening of the Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market. Once the Market re-opens, we'll confirm our scheduled appearance dates and post a call for Master Gardener volunteers through Signup.com.

**Contact**  
Co-Chairs:  
[Matt Dore](#)  
[Sherri Soich](#)  
[Randy Campbell](#)



## Program Committee

Due to uncertainties with COVID-19 this fall, we will be canceling the in-person Harvest Celebration this October. We plan to honor award recipients, new Master Gardeners, and to celebrate highlights from the year through various virtual means (more info to come).

**Contact**  
Chair:  
[Mary Poulter](#)

If you have received an award certificate or pin from 2019 those will be sent by the Extension office via USPS mail.

## Demonstration Garden

The Demonstration Garden ramps up its production as August arrives. Flowers are putting on a brilliant display and the vegetable gardens are producing in earnest. As of the last week of July over 200 lbs of vegetables had been delivered to the local Food Pantry. Everyone is anxiously awaiting the larger beefsteak tomatoes to start ripening.

Soon we will be entering apple harvest season. There is one tree that ripens in summer however most begin later in August and early Sept. At the Demonstration garden production generally runs from mid August to mid October. If you are interested in participating in harvest, please connect with a co-chair as we can guide you on the process.

Late last year it was announced that Ruth was backing away from her role as co-chair of the Demonstration Garden. The current plan is to continue to be involved in the garden, simply not at the same level. Sandie plans to continue working with vegetables. **We need volunteers to step up and take a role. A team of leaders can share the experience and put their talent to use where it best fits. The PCMG projects have a variety of opportunities in terms of event leadership, marketing and advertising of events, fundraising, coordinating education programs, etc. Please contact Ruth, Sandie or Kalsa if you are interested.**

It is recognized that Covid has placed a crimp in many of our lifestyles and optimism keeps us moving forward in hopes that the new normal of 2021 allows our volunteers to be more comfortable in the garden.

Work nights are continuing on Monday evenings. This month's focus is harvest, general maintenance as some flowers start to fade and others begin to shine and watering as needed. If you cannot make it on Monday's and wish to volunteer on your own time, please reach out as we can guide you on areas of greatest need.

Thank you for your volunteer service. We cannot do it without you. Be safe, stay healthy and we hope to meet you in the garden.

Co-chairs:  
[Ruth Doxon](#)  
(515) 253-9115  
[Sandie Sydnes](#)  
(515) 276-1497

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





## Discovery Garden

A Hidden Gem

Discovery Garden is open even without a fair, so stop out sometime to enjoy the garden.

Discovery Garden hosted their first virtual garden tour on 7/20 with the Jefferson Garden Club. This tour went so well that we will be giving another virtual tour to the Muscatine County Master Gardeners on 8/11.

### Contact:

Co-chairs:

[Dean Brand](#) (515) 360-0774

[Joyce Carle](#) (515) 229-6769

[Jean Roe](#) (515) 205-8706

[Patrick Schmitt](#) (515) 657-1937

[View our website](#)

[join our Facebook group.](#)

Discovery Garden is hosting a fundraising sale of worm castings which will be available in late September. We are selling these through a pre order sale only through September 5th. You can purchase 15 or 30 pounds bags at \$15.00 or \$25.00. You can email your order to:

[Discoverygardenpcmg@gmail.com](mailto:Discoverygardenpcmg@gmail.com); to Patrick: [SchmittPatrickJ@gmail.com](mailto:SchmittPatrickJ@gmail.com) or to Joyce Carle: [carlejec@mchsi.com](mailto:carlejec@mchsi.com).

Worm castings create fuller bedding plants, healthier turf, and vigorous container plantings. These are completely organic, odor free, can be used for indoor and outdoor plants, never burns, improves soil structure, drainage and aeration and promotes healthy roots. This sale is open to all master gardeners and friends of master gardeners, so please help us spread the work. Pickup of your order will be sometime in late September.

## Enabling Garden

Our first Season of Learning session at the Enabling Garden is **Tuesday, August 18th at 6:30 PM** with our talk Mother Nature's Medicine by Mamta Israni. Bring a lawn chair and get ready learn the plethora of natural benefits that herbs and spices provide.

Regular work nights at the Enabling Garden continue on every **Tuesday starting in the afternoon around 4:00PM**. As always, please join us for fun and fellowship in the garden. Bring your own sack snack to social distance gather around 6- 6:30, if you would like.

Co-chairs:  
[Rosie Surber](#)  
[Judy Goshorn](#)  
[Paul Satre](#)  
[Christine Barker](#)

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

Thanks again to all of our volunteers helping to keep the garden weeded, watered and beautiful. Don't forget to check us out on Facebook.



## Continuing Education Opportunities

Looking for education opportunities you can do from home as you practice social distancing?

Here are some options you can do right from your couch!

Check out the **2020 Horticultural Event Speakers from BFG supply co!**

Presentations take place the week of Aug 3rd-7th

[Find more info here!](#)



## 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
- [Iowa Weather](#) - 1 hour
- [Bring Kids in the Garden](#) - 1 hour
- [Explore the Ada Hayden Herbarium](#) - 1 hour

Check out the free virtual seminars from Garden Gate - [view their website](#) for additional information, and to register for the event!

## Tallgrass Prairie Center

### Botany Beginners Series

[Session 1](#)

[Session 2](#)

[Session 3](#)

[Session 4](#)



## ISU Integrated Pest Management

[Safe Mushroom Foraging](#)  
[+ Q and A session](#)

## Videos from OSU's Garden Ecology Lab:

[Dueling with Diggers: Moles, Voles, and Ground Squirrels](#)

[Mason Bees](#)

[Reading a Pesticide Label to Protect Bees](#)

[Adapting Dry Farming Techniques to Vegetable Gardens](#)

[Demystifying Grafted Tomatoes](#)

And **[MANY more!](#)**

**Archived Webinars from [Iowa Learning Farms](#)**



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## 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

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ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County  
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[kparker@iastate.edu](mailto:kparker@iastate.edu)



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