Green Thumb
The Newsletter for the Polk County Master Gardeners
August 2015
Matt's Missive

Sharing What We Grow With Our Neighbors:
Will You Help Continue our PCMG Garden Tour Tradition?

Sharing gardening knowledge with our neighbors is a key component of the Master Gardening mission, and our PCMG organization does a wonderful job in this regard. We share gardening know-how at classes held at the Extension Office and at our project gardens, and also at our monthly appearances at the Downtown Farmer's Market. But the educational sharing mission doesn't end there.

The Plant Sale, for example, consistently introduces local gardeners to unique or otherwise hard-to-find plants. And flowers and vegetables are always labelled at the Demo and Enabling Gardens, which get regular visitors at their open houses and throughout the growing season. The upcoming showcase of the Discovery Garden during the State Fair, where hundreds of thousands will see the work of Polk County Master Gardeners, is another great example. Not only are all the Discovery Garden beds carefully labelled, we also have Master Gardeners on hand to answer visitors' questions.

There's another educational project that deserves special mention: the Polk County Master Gardener Garden Tour. For years we have held the Tour on the third Saturday of June in areas that rotate around the County. Visitors get the chance to see and learn about gardening in a wide variety of home settings--shady and sunny, woody and urban, large and small. The host home gardeners and other Master Gardeners are always on hand to answer questions. Not only does this Tour advance our organization's educational mission, it is also a key fundraiser for PCMG that supports ALL of our other gardening projects.

The PCMG Garden Tour is in jeopardy! Michelle Walke has done a fantastic job as Chair of the Garden Tour Committee for years, but she now needs to transition out of her leadership position. Planning and preparation must start soon if we are to have a successful 2016 tour, and we need new Co-Chairs to fill Michelle's shoes. Michelle will share her planning timetables and techniques with her successors, so the only skill set you need is a willingness to work with others.

No one stepped up in response to last month's request for help with this project, so please reconsider whether you can help. Or consider nominating a Master Gardener that you think would be willing to work on the Tour. If you can help or have a suggestion, please contact me, Sherri Soich (sherrisoich@gmail.com) or Mary Farlow within the next couple of weeks. Thanks!

Matthew Dore, Steering Committee Chair, matt.dore@drake.edu
Bus Trips

It's not too late to join our bus tour group as we head to the St. Louis area August 7th to the 9th. We have a full agenda planned with great public and private gardens to visit, along with shopping opportunities at some of the best nurseries in the St. Louis area. We must have your completed registration form and payment in order to hold your spot on the tour. The registration form is available here or on the Polk County Master Gardener website.

Chair: Laurie Barrick barrick8792@msn.com

Demonstration Garden

Our annual open house took place on Thursday, July 16, and by all accounts it was a delightful, if sultry, evening. Visitors strolled through the garden to the sounds of the Heartland of Iowa Classical Guitar Society and enjoyed a variety of demonstrations provided by volunteers. Many thanks to the many master gardeners whose efforts contributed to the health and beauty of the garden and the success of the open house.

Our "How Does a Garden Grow?" series concludes on Thursday, August 6, with our annual "Art in the Garden" challenge. The theme of this year's event is "All about Birds." Everyone is invited to bring a birdhouse made from whatever materials you choose and compete for prizes to be awarded at the end of the evening. Your options are wide open - you may decorate a store-bought model, renovate an older model, or come up with your own design using new or recycled materials. Let your imagination be your guide! The program will begin at 7 p.m. with speaker Dick Woltz from Wild Birds Unlimited, followed by the bird house competition. Hope you can join us, with or without your fabulous birdhouse!

Reminder: There is still a nice pile of rich topsoil on the west side of the Demo Garden available to anyone who needs it. Please help yourself. Scheduled work nights at the Demo Garden are continuing on Mondays beginning at 5:30 pm.

Co-chairs in training:
Diane Ackerman fridafolks@aol.com  Ruth Doxon rdoxon@gmail.com

Discovery Garden

It is hard to believe that it is August and for the Discovery Garden, State Fair time. The gardens are all looking great and should be even better for the fair, thanks to a lot of rain and some warm temps. All of the gardeners have invested a large amount of time and energy, into their beds, so come and visit and see all of the beautiful flowers.

For those of you volunteering at the fair, tickets and passes will be distributed on Wednesday, August 5th, at 6:00 pm. If you cannot make that event, contact Jean Roe and other arrangements will be made. Enjoy the rest of summer.

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 tiltoncm@gmail.com ph: 515-262-0488
Enabling Garden

Our Season of Learning at the Enabling Garden continues with our talk "Love Me some Tomatoes/ Ugly vegetable contest" by PCMGs Bill and Judy Goshorn. The program starts at 6:00PM on Tuesday, August 18th. Bring a lawn chair and get ready to see some of the interesting beauties out of your vegetable garden. Come join us for the final installment of Yoga in the Enabling Garden on Saturday, August 29th at 9:00AM. Please bring a mat and/or a towel as well as your water bottle. The session is free to all and designed for all skill levels, so come get your weekend started off right with some relaxation and stretching. A big thank you to Paula Secker-Johnston of Blue Lotus Yoga, for providing these classes free of charge.Regular work nights at the Enabling Garden continue on every Tuesday starting around 5:00PM. As always, please join us for fun, food and fellowship in the garden.

(Generally, we will be working even when it is hot, but please use your own judgment with the potential for extreme heat and humidity that often comes with the turn of the calendar to August!)

Thanks again to all of our volunteers that help to make the garden beautiful.

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

Farmers Market

July 18 marked our third of five appearances at the downtown Farmers' Market. We spoke to about 240 marketgoers-350 if we count dogs! Our featured topics were native plants and pollinators in the garden. Beth Waage with Polk County Conservation is currently working on a pollinator grant project and brought lots of helpful information to the market, as well as free seed packets donated by Burpee. The seed packets were beautifully designed with pictures of bees, butterflies, annuals, and perennials, and kids and adults alike were delighted to receive them. Next month, on August 15, we tackle the subject of canning. If you would like to volunteer for a two-hour shift at the Farmers' Market, please contact Sherri Soich at sherrisoich@gmail.com.

Greenhouse

Greenhouse assistance needed.

Need more hours? In September, the Greenhouse will be looking for volunteers to help with inventory of the pots and flats to be used for our next growing season. We will meet at the Greenhouse at 9:00 am Saturday, September 12th and again at 9 on Wednesday, September 16th. If you can help out (and finish up your hours), please join us.

Co-Chairs: Alda & Bob Helvey 515-224-6424 bob@tsmcgrp.com
Cheryl Fridl 515-979-0635 cfidl@aol.com
Jean Schustek 515-255-7892 jean.schustek@gmail.com
All Iowa MG Art Show

Applications are closed but don't forget to attend the reception on August 31 from 5:30 to 7:30 at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens. And then visit the exhibit in the North Gallery from Sept 1 thru Nov 16.

Fall MG Classes

The application process has started for ISU Master Gardener classes in Polk County starting in September 2015. If you know anyone who is interested and hasn't already emailed mfarlow@iastate.edu, please ask them to do so as soon as possible. Application deadline is August 3.

Need some Volunteer time this fall?

The Fall 2015 Master Gardener class series will be starting in September. In order for things to flow smoothly, we'll need a dozen or so volunteer class coordinators. It would involve being available Sept. 15, Dec. 15 and 3 Tuesday evenings between those dates. Times would be from 5:45 until 9:45 pm. We'd like all coordinators here for first and last meeting but only 3 need to be here for each of the regular class sessions.

If you are willing to assist, please email me by 9-8-15. Thanks

Mary Farlow

Save the Date

Polk County Extension will be hosting the Fall Horticulture Conference on Nov 7. This year, we'll focus on a full afternoon which should provide five hours of Master Gardener education. Tentatively, registration will start at 11:30 and the program will run from 12:30 until 6 pm. This will allow you to have lunch before the program begins.

Full details should be available by mid-September.
Education Opportunities
ISU Summer Webinars

Polk County Extension and Outreach Office in Altoona will host the last webinar from 6:30 to 8:30 pm on Thursday August 27, Pollinators & Growing Herbs.

Cost per session is $5.00 for Master Gardener households or $10.00 for non-MG households. Please pre-register by email to mfarlow@iastate.edu

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The 2015 Fruit and Vegetable Field Day will take place on 10th August, 2015 (Monday) at the Horticulture Research Station. Please mark your calendar for this year’s Field Day. The event is free (thanks to USDA and SARE support) but registration is still needed to know the amount of food and food preference.

Please click the link below to register http://www.extension.iastate.edu/vegetablelab/fieldday  Similar to last year we are excited to partner with Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. The field day will start at 1:30pm and end with supper and down time to interact with growers, colleagues, etc.

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Each of our gardens still have talks scheduled for August.
There's a web site (www.e-gro.org) you can use for education hours. It's maintained by several universities, including Iowa State, and periodically gives webinars. Those can be education hours. If you can’t participate in the webinar at the time it's live, they catalog them so you can look at them at your leisure. Alda and I have participated in several of them and find them interesting and educational.

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