



The Green Thumb

Monthly News and Updates for Polk County Master Gardeners



In this issue:

- [Message Regarding COVID-19](#)
- [Message from the Steering Committee Chair](#)
- [Downtown Farmers' Market](#)
- [Demonstration Garden](#)
- [Discovery Garden](#)
- [Enabling Garden](#)
- [Continuing Education Opportunities](#)

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](#).

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.

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.

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 or 515-401-6068, or Paul Gibbins, Regional Director for Polk County Extension at pgibbins@iastate.edu or 515-229-9182.

Message from the Steering Committee Chair

Well Happy Summer! Just like the calendar, the weather has sure turned to summer now that we have surpassed the solstice. I hope that you are safely getting out and about in your garden and perhaps had a chance to visit a local garden. As you will see from Kalsa, we are starting to open up a bit to allow folks back into the garden with safety measures. Please use your own judgement and make determinations on your own health and comfort level. While we want you to see you in the gardens, only if you feel comfortable and safe. Despite the social distancing, be present in the moment and really appreciate summer for all it is: the heat, the dry, probably some rain, watching your flowers bloom and your vegetables grow, perhaps the first ripe tomato and of course learning about a fellow Master Gardener. I caught up with Mike Boes to find out about his passion for gardening (notwithstanding the never ending weeding).

Enjoy July!
Christine Barker



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

Mike: My parents were farmers and always had large gardens and a beautiful orchard. All of the family helped to plant and maintain them. My wife has had large vegetable gardens and flower beds. I didn't help her much but it was something I wanted to do more of when I had more time. So when I retired, gardening was part of my plan to stay active and get involved. I stumbled across information about the Master Gardener program on the internet. After investigating MG, I knew it was perfect for what I wanted to do and enrolled in classes for the fall of 2012.

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

Mike: I enjoy growing both. I grow tomatoes, and also carrots, kohlrabi, beets, green beans and cucumbers in raised beds. We have also built a number of beds for flowers and shrubs. I like mixing perennial and annual flowers together with shrubs for a mix of colors and shapes. Landscaping adds so much to the appearance of a home.

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

Mike: It's wonderful to be outside working in the soil no matter what I am doing. Except maybe weeding..... Amazing to plant vegetable seeds and watch as they germinate and grow into delicious fresh food. I also really enjoy watching flowers grow and develop beautiful blooms and watch them fill in a space that looked almost barren when you planted them.

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

Mike: Of course, to learn as much as possible about gardening, and then use that knowledge to help other people with their questions. It is really rewarding to be able to help someone solve a gardening, landscape or lawn problem. I spend almost all my MG time at the Demonstration Garden. It is really fun to work with nice people of similar interests to take care of the garden and hopefully improve it.

Christine Barker
Steering Committee Chair



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](#)

Demonstration Garden

The Demonstration Garden is full of blossoms as we enter July. The roses have started their show,

Co-chairs:

[Ruth Doxon](#)

(515) 253-9115

[Sandie Sydnes](#)

(515) 276-1497

lilies began to open recently and the stands of larkspur have brought in hummingbirds. The plants within the Food Pantry and Raised Vegetable beds continue to develop and harvesting and donation to the Urbandale Food Pantry has started in earnest with early season produce.

It is no longer necessary for volunteers to sign up in advance for Monday evening work nights. We have many opportunities to keep our volunteers socially distanced on our acre plot. Start time continues to be 5pm, arrive when you can and leave when you must. As mentioned previously cleaning supplies are available in the shed if you choose not to use your own tools. Cannot make it on Monday evening and wish to volunteer on your own time? Simply contact a co-chair and we can guide you on where we have garden maintenance needs, educate you on the watering system and access to shed supplies.

Out of an abundance of caution, all Demo garden scheduled events for the months of July and August have been cancelled. We will assess the viability of a September Fall fundraiser at a later date. Due to this unusual season there has been very limited in person conversations and transition in leadership of projects. **If you are interested in taking on an event in 2021 or serving in administration of the garden, please contact a co-chair. Sharing of talents is always appreciated.**

While the City of Urbandale's July 4th celebration has been cancelled, they will be doing a large fireworks display. The Demonstration Garden and nearby grounds are an excellent location for viewing.

We are grateful to all our volunteers that have participated in the garden this year. Thank you for sharing your time and your talent.

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



Discovery Garden

A Hidden Gem

Greetings all. Hope you are all well and staying safe. One thing we are all learning is to be patient and flexible in our volunteer and work



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.](#)

environments. Here is some new information regarding the DG for July.

We no longer have to schedule work time through Dean after today since we can now have more than 10 people in the garden, as long as we practice social distancing. We will now go back to our regular Wednesday evening work nights only. Anyone is always welcome to work on their own any other time. If you need any project to work on, contact any co-chair. On Wednesdays, we will now have a sign up list by day in the barn. That information would only be used if anyone came down sick and we want to let others know who may have been exposed.

We are going to attempt to also host some of our education classes also on Wednesdays at 6:00, in the Farm Bureau Shelter, where there is lots of room to spread out. We will have a signup list. People are encouraged to practice social distancing and wear a mask. Hand sanitizer will also be provided.

Educational Classes, held at 6pm in the Farm Bureau Shelter:

- 7/8: Farm to Table Industry by Holton Homestead from Elkart Iowa
- 7/15: Worm Castings by Central Iowa Organic Fertilizer, Indianola Iowa
- 7/22: Safe Gardening by Dr. Brea Danner, chiropractor from Grimes Iowa
- 7/29: The Monarch Butterfly Story by Jody Nootz and Cindy Fels from Ames Iowa.

We are also working on a new DG video which will go online.

Enabling Garden

Due to COVID-19, we as gardeners and conscientious members of the community have decided to cancel our July programs which included our top notch Children's Art in the Garden Program and our Season of Learning talk. While it saddens us to cancel to these events, we believe it

Co-chairs:

[Rosie Surber](#)

[Judy Goshorn](#)

[Paul Satre](#)

[Christine Barker](#)

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

would be too difficult to ensure the safety of 150+ children, parents and volunteers.

On a positive note, our regular Tuesday work nights will start back up in July, with restrictions as noted by Extension. Please feel free to join us in the mid-to-late afternoon and evenings on Tuesday. Please note, there will be no potluck or food served, so please bring your own snack.



Many thanks for all of your time and expertise!

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

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

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](#)

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



Iowa State University Extension and Outreach does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or status as a U.S. veteran, or other protected classes. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to the Diversity Advisor, 2150 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, 515-294-1482, extdiversity@iastate.edu. All other inquiries may be directed to 800-262-3804.



Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Polk County | 1625 Adventureland Drive | Suite A | Altoona | IA | 50009