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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.

At this time, we are continuing the recommendation for PCMG to postpone or cancel in-person programming through June 30th. The Polk County Extension office remains closed to the public until further notice. Please view our website for updates, including the June 1st letter from our Executive Director.

Polk County Master Gardener projects continue to follow the following recommendations in regards to activities in our gardens:

1. **Meetings & Events**
   a. All in-person meetings & events are to be cancelled through June 30th (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.

As this situation is continuously unfolding, guidelines from Iowa State University, and ISU Extension and Outreach may be updated in the future. 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, executive director for Polk County Extension at pgibbins@iastate.edu or 515-229-9182.

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**Message from the Steering Committee Chair**

Finally some summer like weather is coming our way. I hope that each of you are finding your own way to get out and enjoy the outdoors and maybe even do some social distancing gardening at one or more our beautiful gardens here in Polk County.

This month I caught up with Kim Aalbers who is excited about the gardening opportunities that are currently available to the MGs. She share her thoughts and passions with us.
Christine: What first piqued your interest in gardening? And, how did you make your way to the Master Gardener program?

Kim: My lifelong love of gardening began in my grandmother's huge vegetable garden. Both of my parents grew up in poor Iowa dirt farm families and vegetable gardens and root cellars were the only way that their parents were able to feed their large families. They raised their own meat, milk, eggs, chickens and fish too. It was a love that my parents then passed to me as we grew a large vegetable garden to feed our small family unit. As I married and raised a family, the vegetable garden was an important way to feed my own family with fresh, frozen and canned organic foods all year long. I picked up growing perennial flowers as a natural offshoot from growing my own garden plants and it is a love I have fostered my whole adult life.

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

Kim: Now that I no longer have a large family to feed, I grow a few vegetables to eat fresh and share with neighbors and my children's families. My children's families both have vegetable gardens and feed their families from them using fresh, frozen and canned organic foods.

I have turned a lot of my energy to growing perennials and designing sustainable flower beds for year to year beauty and demonstration and joy for the many neighbors that stop by and ask how to do the same in their yards. I have helped my elderly neighbors plant perennials in their apartment's beds so they have a reason to get outside and enjoy the fresh air too. The growing and sharing of plants with new friends and neighbors is an excellent way to share my love of our amazing earth with as many people as possible. My visible care of this earth is a way to get untold numbers of others involved in the care of this earth. To me, the joy of growing and sharing is the one gift I have to give that will exist in this world after my time here has passed.

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

Kim: The hard work brings joy to my soul, health to my body and when others stop and ask questions at the Enabling Garden and I can encourage them to plant something new in their yards or simply come and enjoy all of our gardener's efforts; that makes me smile. People are always surprised when I point out that the brick raised beds are accessible to people that may need wheelchair assistance to do
their gardening. I want everyone I talk to, to understand that gardening is for everyone; no matter our age or physical abilities! If they want to grow something, there is a way for them to do that.

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

Kim: I want all people that I touch through my Master Gardening to know about the program, know they are welcome to join in and encourage them that they are capable of doing something outside in the soil that enriches their lives like it has mine. A lot of people have just never been exposed to the act of growing flowers or vegetables. I want to encourage others and be willing to stop and take the time to explain gardening to anyone that is interested. I want them to discover how easy growing something can be and the satisfaction it can bring into their lives. Sharing the beauty of flowers and pointing out the vegetable gardens we grow is why I took the classes. I now have the ability to share my Love of growing with countless others. Not a day goes by when I am in the Enabling Gardens, that someone doesn't stop to ask questions. The Master Gardener classes have given me a much deeper informational base to draw from and I always encourage others to use the ISU Extension office when it opens, to pick up information there, consider taking the Master Gardener classes themselves and to access the ISU website to find answers to other questions that they may have when no one is in the Enabling Gardens to assist them.

Christine Barker
Steering Committee Chair

2020 Bus Trips

We are sorry to announce that we have decided to postpone both of the bus trips originally scheduled to take place later this summer to next year.

It is our hope that by next summer Covid-19 will not be as much of a risk for our travelers, and that we can resume the bus trips again.

Thank you to those of you that had already registered for the one day trip - we appreciate your support and we look forward to having you join us next year!

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

We give gratitude for the rains and also welcome the sunshine that arrived post multiple days of cloud cover. Our new transplants will be grateful for the upcoming sunshine and warmth.

Most beds have been planted. While there are no major projects at the garden this summer there are many opportunities to volunteer. Routine maintenance of weeding, watering, trimming, etc. are always in need. The Demo garden has physically distanced work evenings on Mondays. Start time 5pm. Arrive when you can, leave when you must. There are a variety of opportunities allowing for social distance and staying within the recommended guidelines. If interested in working on your own time at the garden please contact a co-chair as we can guide you. When using the Demo garden tools we ask that you clean them post usage as a safety precaution.

The Demonstration Garden’s education programs for the month of June have been cancelled. They will not be rescheduled during 2020. We are working with our speakers to see if they will commit to next summer.

Thank you to all the volunteers that have participated in clean up, planting, watering etc. Your efforts keep the garden beautiful.

Stay safe, stay healthy and we do hope to meet you in the garden some time this summer.

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

In order to work in the gardens you have to keep scheduling through Dean Brand (drbrand@mediacombb.net or tel: 515.360-0774).

Scheduling is based on first come first serve in terms of time slots due to the continuation of restrictions of 10 people at a time. You need to be out of the gardens by dark.

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

Enabling Garden

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 guidance, we have had to cancel our June installment of our Season of Learning.

Our regular work nights haven't been too regular this year (yet) due to the COVID-19, but we are hopeful that may be able to start a more regular work night gathering in July. Stay tuned for news in both the Green Thumb and our Enabling Garden Facebook Page. Despite our need for different working requirements to keep you and the community safe, the garden is incredibly beautiful with all of the help of our volunteers. Thank you to all of you that are making a difference in the community. I am sure when you are in the garden, you hear from those passing by what an amazing and uplifting place the Enabling Garden is for folks to get out and experience.

Co-chairs:
Rosie Surber
Judy Goshorn
Paul Satre
Christine Barker

Visit our website and connect with us on our Facebook Group.
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 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

NEW 2020 Winter Webcasts
Iowa Weather
Bring Kids in the Garden
Explore the Ada Hayden Herbarium

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:

February 5: Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture
A Water Quality Chat

March 18: Matt Russell
Embracing the call to abundance, the value of environmental service on Iowa farms

March 25: Mark Rasmussen
Carbonate research and the potential for carbon storage in Iowa soils

April 8: Liz Ripley & Mark Licht
Succeeding with Cover Crops & No-Till: A Guide for Spring 2020

April 15: Adam Janke
Finding Mutual Opportunities for Soil, Water, and Wildlife

April 22: Billy Beck
Trees, Forests, and Forestry: Benefits to Water Quality and On-Farm Income
Master Gardeners in our Community

With all that is going on in the world, I'm sure we'd all welcome some cheerful news. Check out this article on Gladys Hertzber, longtime Master Gardener, and her work with the Kavanagh House!

Have stories of the positive impact of Master Gardeners that you want to share? Send to Kalsa by mid-month for a chance to be included in an upcoming Green Thumb.

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

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