



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.](#)

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

Wow, it is October 2020 already. As I was writing this, I realized that it will be my last Green Thumb interview that I will conduct. I have enjoyed getting to know more MGs. It has been my pleasure being able to serve as the Steering Committee Chair and I know that we will be in good hands with our incoming Chair, Marietta Rives.

For my last interview I was able to connect with Kathy Cole. Her zest for gardening and life shines through in her answers below. Enjoy!

Christine Barker



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

Kathy:

I was raised on a farm in rural Clarke County and I have been gardening in some sort or another since I was a little girl. Helping my mother with the vegetables, strawberries and in her huge flower gardens. As I grew older, and had homes of my own, I always tried to find some space where I could plant some flowers or have a tomato plant or two.

From small acreages where I had a lot of space, to living in apartments, where my space was very limited or non-existent, I would find a way to have something growing.

As a child and in 4-H, I was familiar with the ISU Extension Service and the services they had to offer. When I got older one of the people I worked with told me that she had taken classes to become a Master Gardener. That intrigued me and there and then, hoped someday to be a Master Gardener myself. As the years went by and I was working full time and taking care of my family, I didn't feel I had time to take classes, so I put it on the back burner, so to speak, but always kept the desire to be a Master Gardener someday.

When I retired in 2017, I decided this was the right time and signed up for classes in the fall. I have loved every minute of being a Master Gardener. Being on different committees like the MG Garden Tour in 2018-2020, working in the greenhouse, plant sales, bus tours and our different gardens, I have made so many new friends and love the experiences I have had every day as a Master Gardener.

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

Kathy:

I love growing both vegetables and flowers. Each one by themselves, can be exciting and new each time they are planted. We have three raised gardens where we plant vegetables and herbs. This year we had two varieties of green beans, three varieties of potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, garlic and lots of cucumbers.

Our flower garden is a mix of perennials and annuals. I love the mix from different varieties of hosta to many different colors of coneflowers, hibiscus and hydrangea. I have included several Iowa native flowers to the mix as well. We have added a fountain we constructed from Rose Quartz boulders and rocks as a focal point.

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

Kathy:

I love being outside in the garden, watching the hummingbirds and butterflies flying from flower to flower getting the nectar they need. Watching the garden change from day to day, season to season and always a surprise that is unexpected.

A smile comes to my face to know that my husband and I have created something beautiful and inviting. I love sitting on our porch swing just off the garden and listening to the rush of water from our fountain and see of the beauty of what we have put together.

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

Kathy:

I would want others who have ever wanted to, or thought they would like to be a Master Gardener, to go for it! You learn so much, even though you may have thought you knew it already. It doesn't matter if you have a big garden or a few pots with flowers or veggies, you can do this. I have learned so much and gained knowledge from being in the program and made new friends that I will always cherish. It's nice to work with other people that love to work in the soil, the land, the nature of growing something you love.

Christine Barker
Steering Committee Chair

Steering Committee Elections

Cast your vote!

Please fill out the below survey to vote in our annual Steering Committee Elections.
Survey will be open through October 15th.

https://iastate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_79ZcVhNKG75W8zX

PCMG Volunteer Manual

Are you familiar with the volunteer guidelines for
Polk County Master Gardeners?

[View those here!](#)

October Harvest Celebration

As a reminder, we will not be holding an October Harvest Celebration this year, instead, we will be sharing highlights from the year, honoring award recipients, and announcing Steering Committee members via a special newsletter.

Garden Tour

Contact

Chair:

[Brenda Peshak](#)

Vice chair:

[Angie Strang](#)

A big thank you goes out to the team that worked this past year for the Garden Tour 2020. Though we had to cancel the event many people spent lots of hours getting a wonderful event ready. Looking forward, we have some awesome changes for the Garden Tour!



We welcome new Chair; Brenda Peshak. Brenda is currently employed as a project manager for three development teams, and has helped plan many conferences and events over the years. She is married and has one daughter in 1st grade, who is doing online school.

Brenda's Vice Chair will be Angie Strang. Angie is a client manager in the benefits world and has helped to organize several gardening events. She has two children who are also online learning this year.

Due to the pandemic and health cautions we did not have the Garden Tour this year. In order to not conflict with the Beaverdale Garden Walk, the Garden Tour has been postponed until 2022. Though we're sad to postpone another year, this gives the Garden Tour committee time to coordinate to come back strong and blooming for 2022! Keep your eyes open for volunteer opportunities if you're interested!



Demonstration Garden

Seasons are changing and the gardens are starting to wind down. In the coming weeks we will be harvesting the last of the tomatoes and peppers, winter squash and the cool loving kale. It has been a good year for vegetable production. As of the end of last month the garden had donated over 900 lbs of vegetable produce to the Urbandale Food Pantry.

Apple harvesting will continue throughout the month of October as most of our trees are mid to late season producers. Over 600 lbs of fruit donations had been made as of the last work night in September. If you have a long handled picker we could use your assistance in harvesting the trees.

Fall clean up is scheduled for Saturday, October 17th start time 9am. Come when you can, leave when you must. Work Monday evenings will continue post clean up as long as there are harvest needs.

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

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



Planning for 2021 is in progress. **If you are interested in forming a team and managing a bed (its a great way to stay involved and see that your volunteer hours are met) please contact a co-chair.** Several opportunities are available to match your talent whether it be digging in the dirt, designing, managing events, etc.

Thank you to all the volunteers that continue to work in the garden and make it the treasure that it is.



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

A Hidden Gem

The Discovery Garden will start the process of tearing out all the annuals the **week 10/4 so any extra help on 10/7 is greatly appreciated.**

Do you have interest in being a part of the Discovery Garden Team for 2021? or want more information? You can contact any co-chair member or send an email request to: Discoverygardenpcmg@gmail.com.

Do you have skills as an artist videographer or in creating CD's, if so, the Discovery Garden has some pending projects in case you are interested. Please contact: Discoverygardenpcmg@gmail.com

Enabling Garden

Our evening work nights are starting to get shorter and shorter, so we will be wrapping up Tuesday work nights on Tuesday, October 13th, which will be a clean-up night. Additionally, we will have a final clean-up on Saturday, October 17th 12:00 PM

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

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

for removal of annuals and to complete other tasks around the garden. This is a great opportunity to pick up several volunteer hours in before the end of the 2020 season!

This has been a challenging year and the EG co-chairs would like to thank all of the volunteers for their time and gifted contributions to the garden. Despite the social distancing requirements, you have made the Enabling Garden a beautiful respite for people of the community. This was only made possible due to our faithful volunteers and friends of the garden.



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!

Building a Better Monarch Butterfly Garden

[View links to the webcast and related resources 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](#)



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



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