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

Hello Fellow MGs,

Happy September! Where has the year gone? I am sure most of you are saying the same thing! The pandemic and the more recent Derecho have really thrown everyone for a loop. I hope that you are all finding ways to stay healthy and sane. I had the chance to catch up with Darin Bennigsdorf, a busy MG who has passion in spades for gardening and his new friends that he has made in the garden.

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

Darin: When I was about six, I saw my Grandfather’s large garden and asked Dad if he would "plow" a garden up for me at home. We lived on a farm. Dad found a little spot the next spring and the gardening started from there. What really hooked me is when the family ate my first crop of sweet peas. Mom raved about how tasty they were. I thought they were spectacular too.

When my wife, Deanna, and I moved to an acreage 28 years ago, I found I could, once again, have a garden. Before that, it was not easy growing things when I lived in apartments in Des Moines.
Once our kids were all on their own, Deanna and I found we had a little more time to do something together. She also loves gardening. What better way to spend time together than learning about all kinds of cool plant topics in the Master Gardener program?

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

Darin: I prefer vegetables. I like to try different things. A few years back, I grew peanuts. They turned out pretty good. Hint, unless you are adventurous, do not eat boiled peanuts!

The most beautiful part of our acreage is all the flowers and plants my wife grows.

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

Darin: Our chickens and potbelly pigs. The chickens are welcome in the garden. They eat all kinds of nasty bugs. The pigs, on the other hand, know the garden is off limits. That does not stop them from sneaking a nice ripe tomato or beans if I do not keep my eye on them. They are so sneaky, or at least they think they are!

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

Darin: It is not just about growing plants. It is also about growing relationships.

Of course, I learned about plant biology, pest control, soil management, caring for trees and a list of other things that is a mile long. I have also met new friends that share the same interest. I learn as much from them as I did from the MG classes. Those friends are also fun! That is a bonus.

Christine Barker
Steering Committee Chair

New PCMG Video! - Discovery Garden

With no Iowa State Fair this year, we wanted to still be able to share the Discovery Garden with the masses - please view our video and share with friends and family!
Garden Tour

While we were disappointed that Covid did not allow us to have this year's garden tour, plans are already underway for 2021. We have new and dynamic leadership stepping up-- Brenda Peshak (class of 2019) has agreed to be chair of the 2021 garden tour and Angie Strang (class of 2019) has agreed to serve as vice chair.

The Garden tour is in very capable hands. Having worked with both Brenda and Angie this past year-- I know full well their capable organizational qualities, strong marketing skills and project management experience. They both are excited to take this on and bring passion and energy to the event. Despite the cancellation due to Covid, Master Gardener work strengthened the garden tour. We were able to introduce new technology, expanded marketing, increased sponsorships and a gorgeous website. It's a great start for 2021. Another significant accomplishment is the redesign of the Jacqueline Baldwin Garden in Dunlap Gardens Urbandale. A dynamic team led by Charity McCauley Andweg deserves congratulations. With all that accomplishment, Brenda begins planning for 2021 with much in place.

Thank you to everyone who worked on the Garden tour this past year. I especially thank our vice chair Kathy Cole for her many contributions to this effort. It was a joy to get to know so many creative passionate people.

-Jean Samson - Past Chair
Demonstration Garden

The transition to fall begins. We continue to have Monday work nights, start time 5pm, arrive when you can. Weather is starting to cool which is a welcome break from the heat of recent weeks. Now if only rain would enter the picture.

As of the end of the August the Demonstration Garden had exceeded 600lbs of vegetable donations to our local Food pantry. The grapes were recently harvested increasing our fruit donation (includes spring rhubarb and early apples) to over 280 lbs. Two of our earlier apple trees are ready for harvest. If you have a bit of time to assist, we could use your services.

Planning ahead, Saturday, October 17th is our tentative fall clean up. Start time 9am, we work until complete which is generally around noon.

This is the time when we begin planning in earnest for 2021. Please contact a co-chair with your areas of interest. Numerous volunteer opportunities are available.

Thank you to all our volunteers that have weeded, watered and harvested this past month. (particularly during the heat). Stay safe and stay healthy.

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

The 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; to Patrick: SchmittPatrickJ@gmail.com or to Joyce Carle: carlejec@mchsi.com.

Worm castings create fuller bedding plants, healthier turf, and vigorous container plantings.

Contact:
Co-chairs:
Dean Brand (515) 360-0774
Joyce Carle (515) 229-6769
Jean Roe (515) 205-8706
Patrick Schmitt (515) 657-1937
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

Just a reminder that our field trip to the Snyder Heritage Farms is cancelled, the farm is not allowing tours right now during COVID-19.

We have a terrific opportunity for anyone looking to pick up perennial plant material this fall! We are having a fall sale of ornamental grasses and gorgeous daylilies.

- To purchase material you must join the Facebook 'Altoona/Bondurant/Pleasant Hill For Sale site
- This sale is online and opens on Friday, September 11th and will close when we have sold the allotted plant material available.
- Saturday, September 19th, 12:00 Noon - 3:00 PM → Pick-up and payment for plant material at the Enabling Garden. We will be taking extra precautions to protect both our volunteers and customers.

Planning Ahead - Garden Clean-Up dates:
- Tuesday, October 13th: 3PM (for those available) - until dusk.
- Saturday, October 17th: Noon - Completion (bring your own snack)

If you would like to join us working in the garden, our regular work nights will continue on every Tuesday as long as the weather is good. Please join us any time in the late afternoon for fun and fellowship in the garden.

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 that help to make the garden beautiful.

Continuing Education Opportunities

Building a Better Monarch Butterfly Garden

View links to the webcast and related resources here!

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 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

FREE Virtual Event!

2020 GROW BETTER! Garden Summit
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
ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County
(515) 957-5768
kparker@iastate.edu