Matt's Missive

To quote the prison warden from *Cool Hand Luke* (a movie that *most* Polk County Master Gardeners are old enough to remember): “What we have here is a failure to communicate.” Well, sort of.

As many of you know, Mary Farlow has been on leave during December and January, and her return date has not yet been set. We hope it will be soon. In Mary’s absence, we haven’t had either a monthly *Green Thumb* or a weekly *This & That*. I don’t know about you, but my email inbox just isn’t the same without them. So we’ve cobbled together this *Green Thumb* as a placeholder until Mary Farlow can organize a new issue for March. For those craving even more gardening news in the meantime, remember that Iowa State University’s Master Gardener webpage ([http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/](http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/)) is updated with gardening news, volunteer and education opportunities on a regular basis.

Every new year brings change, and as you’ll see from the reports below, Polk County Master Gardener projects are already gearing up for 2015. Another change that many are noting is the increase in annual community service and education hours that gardeners must complete in order to retain Master Gardener status in 2015 and beyond: 20 community service hours and 10 education hours. For those of you who think that sounds daunting, I’ll share a quote from my 92-year old father—“That’s no hill for a stepper!” And Polk County Master Gardeners are steppers.

As this *Green Thumb* issue reflects there is no shortage of volunteer opportunities in our organization. The various winter and spring planning meetings for Master Gardener projects listed below would be a great place to start. So would some early spring cleaning at home to gather gardening-related donations for the Plant Sale. And don’t forget that the Greenhouse is open for volunteers starting next week—February 4.

You can also get a jump on your education hours before the gardening season gets going. One way to do that is to access video recordings of last fall’s Master Gardener classes. You can watch these from home! Mary Farlow will be able to provide you instructions for access once she returns.
Speaking of Master Gardener “steppers,” I regret to inform you that Robert “Bob” Davenport, one of the founders of the Discovery Garden and a longtime Iowa Master Gardener, died on January 15 at age 87. For those who missed Bob’s obituary, see http://www.legacy.com obituaries/desmoinesregister/obituary.aspx?n=robert-e-davenport&pid=173873121&fhid=13196

In other news, for those who keep score, my house AGAIN failed to win a prize in the annual Christmas Lighting contest, thus retaining its status as the Susan Lucci of Beaverdale. But there may be hope. Last year, the home of my neighbor and fellow Master Gardener, Sherri Soich, came in Second Place (or “First Loser” to quote both Dale Earnhardt and Talladega Nights). We’ll see. In the meantime, garden happy and stay warm! ~~ Matt

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

Demonstration Garden

With temperatures in the 40’s, it’s hard to believe we still have two more months of winter to go. That’s plenty of time to leaf through garden catalogs, draw up garden designs, and get those special seeds started. If you are feeling a little more ambitious and would like to earn some volunteer hours in the “off” season, the demo garden might have a winter project that could use your special talents. Contact Ruth Doxon if you are interested in cleaning and sharpening garden tools, creating a photo directory, compiling and documenting the demo garden’s history, or creating a spreadsheet on education classes.

Save the date: Our annual Spring Planning Meeting will take place on Monday, March 30th, at 6:30 pm at the Urbandale Library

Until then, stay warm and don’t forget to feed the birds!

Co-chairs in training:

Diane Ackerman fridafolks@aol.com
Ruth Doxon rdoxon@gmail.com
Susan Travis eagles.wind@gmail.com

Discovery Garden

The Discovery Garden at the Iowa State Fairgrounds is entering an exciting time of revitalizing renovations. The Discovery Garden is an approved project garden of the Polk County Master Gardeners, fiscally managed by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach-Polk County Office, in cooperation with and located at the Iowa State Fair. Polk County Master Gardeners have managed, promoted and created the Discovery Garden for nearly thirty years. The Garden is entirely maintained by 85 Certified Master Gardener volunteers who annually replant 5,000 square feet in an effort to reinvent this beautiful oasis visited by tens of thousands each year.
The Discovery Garden will be embarking on a major renovation project to update our Garden. The Co-Chairs have developed a diligent plan for renovation with the main focus being a hardscape pathway. Our vision is a permeable pathway made out of recycled materials which will provide an easier and safer access to those with disabilities and assist in nutrient load reductions to water resources. This renovation project may be completed in phases, if needed. Other phases include: upgrade to our existing Gazebo, hardscape edging around our Perennial Bed and other miscellaneous projects.

A current grant application for the pathway is in process whereby the Discovery Garden is required to provide a 50% matching fund. The total estimated costs for all phases of the renovation are $175,000. Since the Discovery Garden operates as a non-profit organization, we also rely upon individual and area business donations to attempt to raise the 50% of our project costs through gifts or donations.

How you can assist? Consider donating to the Discovery Garden. Gifts given for public purposes to the Discovery Garden at the Iowa State Fairgrounds are tax-deductible as defined under Iowa tax code and federal guidelines. Any Discovery Garden gift or donation inquiry may be directed to: Discovery Garden in c/o Co-Chair Patrick Schmitt at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach-Polk County Office, 1625 Adventureland Dr., Suite A, Altoona, IA 50009, 515-279-9645.

*Please join us as we look forward to 2015! Iowa State Fair Dates are August 13-23, 2015.*

Co-Chairs: Dean Brand, Jean Roe, Patrick Schmitt and Cheree Tilton

Like us on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/groups/discoverygarden/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/discoverygarden/) or view our website at [www.discoverygardenpcmg.org](http://www.discoverygardenpcmg.org)

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

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**Enabling Garden**

Late winter is the perfect time to spend a few moments planning for the upcoming season so that we can hit the ground running when Spring finally arrives.

We have a planning meeting set for Thursday, February 5th with a 6:00PM meeting start with a 5:30 social. The meeting will be held at the Polk County Extension Offices in the windows Conference Room. Please join us for fun and fellowship. We will be planning our first event of the year, The Enabling Garden Arbor Day Celebration. Steve Hanson, “Tree Enthusiast” will be our feature speaker. Our celebration will be held on Saturday, April 25th at 11:00 AM – 1:00PM in the Garden. There will be much more to come, as we get our committees formed and working to pull together a fun and educational session for all ages.
Please connect with us on our website www.enablinggardenpcmg.org or look us up on our Facebook page to see current pictures and activities that are going on at the Enabling Garden.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered. We appreciate your time.

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

**Garden Tour**

This year’s garden tour will feature gardens in the western Ankeny, Saydel, and Lower Beaver neighborhoods.

**Save the date!**

**PCMG Garden Tour**

**Saturday, June 20**

*9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Rain or Shine*  
*Tickets $15 each - Tickets on sale May 30*

Volunteer Opportunities ...

1. Garden Preparation - many volunteers are needed to assist the MGs who are part of this year's tour. Plan on helping with spring clean-up, weeding, watering, mulching and generally getting the gardens ready to be on display. A variety of dates and times will be available beginning when the snow(?) is gone.

2. Tour Day Volunteers - volunteers are needed to serve as guides at the gardens, answering gardening questions and sharing educational information. Two different 4-hr. shifts will be available on Saturday, June 20. Tour Day Volunteers also need to attend the Volunteer Training Tour on Saturday, June 13.

Anyone interested in being a Tour Day or Garden Preparation Volunteer can sign up on the volunteer-management website that will open on March 1. Watch for the link in the next issue of The Green Thumb!

**Michelle Walke**  
**Garden Tour Chair**  
[mwalkedesign@mac.com](mailto:mwalkedesign@mac.com)

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**Master Gardener Plant Sale 2015**

Although winter is still very much with us, it is not too early to start thinking about our 2015 Plant Sale.

There are two things we would like everyone to begin planning for now with regards to the sale.
The first is volunteering to help out with the sale. Volunteer opportunities will available to help with organization and set up prior to the sale, as well as working a shift at the pre-sale on Friday, May 1\textsuperscript{st}, the actual sale itself which will be held on Saturday, May 2\textsuperscript{nd} and Sunday May 3\textsuperscript{rd} and the post sale which will likely be held on Friday, May 8\textsuperscript{th}.

The Plant Sale Committee is planning on using Volunteer Spot, an online volunteer sign up site which we will make available in March. We used this vehicle last year and it worked very well as volunteers could check online to see what slots were available and where our greatest need was. The sale itself is a huge undertaking and many hands make light work. It is also a wonderful opportunity to get your volunteer hours (remember you will need 20 hours this year to stay certified) as well as meet many great people and learn a lot about the plants we grow.

The second thing we would like all of you to start thinking about is what donations you might make to the sale. Anything garden related is accepted. Perennials, house plants, bulbs, books, magazines, planters, garden art, tools, ect., ect., ect. You get the picture! All of your donated items translate to pure profit and since The Plant Sale is our biggest fundraiser for the Master Gardener Program, it is a great way to support the cause. Look for more information in March, but again, it isn’t too early to start thinking about what role you can play to make the 2015 sale an even bigger success than last year.

**Plant Sale Chairs:** Jen Jenkins 422-8947, Isabella Hurless- Banks 278-2067, and Joy Trueblood 473-2638

**Greenhouse**

The Greenhouse will be open for business on February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. Our day begins at 9:00 and ends when we complete that day’s chores. You can start and leave any time you need. Remember, in 2015 you’ll need 20 volunteer hours to recertify. When you arrive, check in with the Captain for that day for a task. The Captains by month are: February - Alda Helvey, March - Jerry Ferrell, April - Sherry Swihart, and May - Bob Helvey. Work days at the greenhouse are open to Polk County Master Gardeners only. Do not bring anyone with you. If you do, you’ll politely be asked to leave.

We will be needing volunteers to water on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each month this year. February we need two people each day, March we need three, April and May we need four. In 2014 a key was left in the Victorian Acres office giving easy access to anyone who knew about it, which may be a factor in the disappearance of plants, pots, tools, and supplies. For 2015 the watering periods will be scheduled so someone with a key can give access to all the volunteers at the same time. The time may differ for each day depending on the availability of the person with the key. If you’re interested in volunteering please send an email to bob@tsmcgrp.com with the day(s) and month(s) you want to volunteer.

**Alda & Bob Helvey** 515-224-6424 bob@tsmcgrp.com
Upcoming Webinars

Here are a few upcoming webinars you can consider for education hours:

**Thursday, January 29**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
**Growing Conifers in the Home Garden**, University of Minnesota Extension
Cost: Free - a link will be sent to you after registering to watch webinar from home.
Register online at:
https://umn.webex.com/mw0401sp11/mywebex/default.do?nomenu=true&siteurl=umn&service=6&rn=0.321676909884733&main_url=https%3A%2F%2Fumn.webex.com%2Fec0701sp11%2Feventcenter%2Fevent%2FeventAction.do%3FtheAction%3Ddetail%26confViewID%3D1970166209%26EMK%3D4832534b000000026ce55059a41ddcd6544c9a361af597c4bbd37e46628c6187a23bf7c24d9b97c2a%26%26siteurl%3Dumn

**Tuesday, February 3**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
**Growing Apples in the Home Garden**, University of Minnesota Extension
Cost: Free - a link will be sent to you after registering to watch webinar from home.
Register online at:
https://umn.webex.com/mw0401sp11/mywebex/default.do?nomenu=true&siteurl=umn&service=6&rn=0.5423205369327995&main_url=https%3A%2F%2Fumn.webex.com%2Fec0701sp11%2Feventcenter%2Fevent%2FeventAction.do%3FtheAction%3Ddetail%26confViewID%3D1970174190%26EMK%3D4832534b00000002bb4423125035341984f5d4d958e377a83ef08846f4a183a761b7d450ee7b5b57%26%26siteurl%3Dumn

**Thursday, February 12**
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
**Supporting Local Food Systems - In the Community:** Hear how Master Gardeners are teaching in community gardens and growing produce for food banks.
Cost: $5 for Master Gardeners, $10 general public - pay at the door
Where: Polk County Extension Office
Register by emailing Andrea Nelson at nelsonar@iastate.edu or call 515-957-5775

**Thursday, March 12**
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
**Supporting Local Food Systems - Back to School:** Learn how Master Gardeners are engaging in school gardens and supporting systems change for health.
Cost: $5 for Master Gardeners, $10 general public - pay at the door
Where: Polk County Extension Office
Register by emailing Andrea Nelson at nelsonar@iastate.edu or call 515-957-5775
ISU Master Gardener Newsletter

If you are not already on the list, go to http://www.mastergardener.iastate.edu/news.html, open the latest edition and find the “join our list” link on the left side. This will send you news of MG events around the state each month.

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Extension and Outreach

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