MEETING PLANS
The Wapello County Master Gardeners will meet on Monday, December 3 at 6:30 pm at the Extension Office. We can share reflections on the 2018 gardening season.

On the agenda (we will vote on these two issues):
• Meeting schedule: Do we keep our current meeting schedule (every month except January, September, or any first Monday of the month holiday) or switch to meeting every other month.
• Home and Garden Show booth: Do we share a booth with Extension Office (if they participate).

MEETING MINUTES
The Wapello County Master Gardeners met on Monday, November 5 at Oak Meadow Delight Bed and Breakfast, with 9 people present. Marvin Boyer, who owns the B and B with his wife, showed us the large water feature in their backyard after a tour of the B and B. Following the quick tour of their backyard, Marvin escorted us to the garage where he explained how he winterizes the water feature and showed us the large pump and the “vacuum” he uses for the water feature. He moves the koi from the pond to a tank in the heated garage.

Following the tour and “lesson”, the group retreated to the Harvest Room for gardening discussions and the business meeting. Carol passed out a list of Fall Gardening Tasks and shared that the Missouri Botanical Garden has great photos of winter annual weeds on their website. Richard shared names of several herbicides and an insecticide. Range Star Weedmaster® is a broadleaf herbicide that will kill some of those pesky winter annual weeds. A substitute for Toradon® is Grazon®, which Richard says will kill trumpet vine (research on the web says that animals should not be allowed on the treated area for 7 days). (Note: Both appear to be available to the public, as they can be purchased on Amazon.) An insecticide that will kill boxelders and lady beetles is Tempo® (can be used both indoors and outdoors per the internet). [NOTE: As always, read label directions thoroughly!]

The meeting was called to order by meeting leader, Larry Valentine.

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes of the October meeting.


Old Business:
Change in meeting frequency to every other month discussion: Mary shared that she thinks we should meet any time we can for sharing and learning. Larry shared that we could have more activities, not necessarily at the same time as the meeting (he says Jefferson County group does not meet every month, but they have other activities such as tours.) Carol has suggested that the group could meet Feb/Apr/June/Aug/Oct/Dec. AT THE DECEMBER MEETING WE WILL VOTE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER WHETHER TO CONTINUE MEETING EVERY MONTH (EXEPT JANUARY AND HOLIDAY CONFLICTS).

Enchanted Forest date: November 17th

New Business:
The Home and Garden Show is possibly coming back on February 23 and 24. No details were available, but Brenda said that United Way was planning to have a booth. We will discuss this further at the December meeting. Members expressed that the show is a good place for exposure to the public, but maybe we could have a Facebook page or an article in the paper.

Educational event: Several ideas were tossed out for thought—sponsoring a speaker at the Home Show or sponsor an event with a co-sponsor such as United Way or Laureate Guild.

Educational hours for 2018: Carol will send a log of events (that she is aware of) to club members. Hours need to be entered by December 31. It was suggested that members who need to log hours keep a notebook to record volunteer and educational hours as soon as they occur, and enter them periodically on the MG website throughout the year.

Gardening Tool Lending Library: Brenda was contacted by Sonya Ferrell, Ottumwa Public Library Director, about starting a “lending library” for gardening tools in the spring. Contact Brenda if you have any extra garden tools in good condition that you wished to donate.

Meeting adjourned.
Secretary, Carol Geib

TREASURER’S REPORT
Balance: $1106.94

MONTHLY WEATHER REVIEW
Now we know---- the old saying is that on whatever day you get the first tracking snow, one that you can track a cat, will be the number of snows that you will receive for the winter. Our first tracking snow came on the evening of November 8th. We then had the snow on the 17th that pretty much melted all day long and then accumulated about 4 inches or more in the evening in our area when it got a little colder. We now have 6 more snows to come for the winter. Remember that they shouldn’t be big ones because the hornet’s nest was not that high off the ground.

Also, the old saying is: If Christmas falls on Tuesday, it will be a mild winter. And this winter appears like it could be mild (temperature wise). Another old saying: on November 21st---on this day, so the winter. That was the day before Thanksgiving. It was mild with some sun and approximately 45 degrees---that is acceptable. However, on November 25th---Foul or fair, So will be next February. That is this Sunday and the forecast predicts rain, snow and colder temperatures.

Looks like October can be called a winner again this year with 19 fine days for the month. It was dry on October 16th and the old saying is that means a dry spring. Another one is: Ice in November brings
mud in December. And: If there be ice in November that will bear a duck, there’ll be nothing thereafter but sleet and muck. Some more old sayings: If ice will bear a man before Christmas, it will not bear a mouse afterwards. Christmas in snow, Easter in mud. A green Christmas, a white Easter. A green Christmas makes a fat cemetery. Several of these old sayings are referring to a fairly mild winter, this could be good or bad, depending on if we get ice storms or other freezing rain. Usually a milder winter causes more people to be sick. Also, El Nino is supposed to be declared this winter and that also means a milder winter for us.

The whole eastern part of the United States has been hit with heavy rains time after time this summer and fall season, the hurricanes, and this last storm has left them with lots of snow, and very cold weather in the upper northeast. We were very dry this summer, but our crop yields were very good. In general, I think we are one of the most fortunate areas for weather, so far, in the United States.

You are aware of the horrible California fires and the most recent fires there. The town of Paradise in Northern California that is the same as completely destroyed with approximately 7,000 homes and buildings burned, and the death toll still is not known due to close to 800 people still missing. Known as the Camp Fire which began last Thursday, the 8th of November, the wildfire grew to burn over 200,000 acres very quickly as strong northerly winds fanned the flames, and it is still burning. It has become the most destructive wildfire in the state’s modern history in terms of lives lost and destruction of buildings and property. Air quality levels across the northern portion of the state have been in the “hazardous” category causing numerous health problems for area residents. This year will likely be the worst fire season in California history. WHO radio had a forester on the radio the other morning and he said that most of California’s fires could have been avoided if the proper “forest management” had been practiced. Now, November 20th, rain is reported going over portions of the state and the town of Paradise could get up to 3 inches of rain---- will the mudslides and flooding begin?

There were also two major blazes in the southern part of the state. The Woolsey Fire exploded quickly to 8,000 acres in Los Angeles and Ventura counties in just a few hours once it began. In just a few days the Woolsey Fire grew to over 80,000 acres. The other blaze in Southern California, the Hill fire, has burned about 4,500 acres. The California fires have forced more than 300,000 people from their homes throughout the state. The two fires in Southern California are expected to burn “all the way to the ocean.”

The 2018 California fires have been the most destructive in the state’s history. There has been a total of nearly 7,600 fires that have burned over 1.6 million acres. The cost from these blazes is about $3 billion prior to the recent outbreak, so the damage total will go much higher. Texas has had its worst fire season since 2011 as about 900 wildfires were reported. Across the U.S., about 8.3 million acres have burned from January 1 through November 11, most of which was in the western U.S. Last year the figure was close to 8.9 million acres. Currently there are 6 large fires in California, including the Camp Fire, Woolsey Fire and Hill Fire. Canada has had a busy fire season as well. In British Columbia, nearly 2,000 fires have burned approximately 2.4 million acres. In Ontario, there were about 1325 fires, compared to a normal of 750 fires. One consolation is that in the next 10 days there is supposed to be an increase in moisture across most of California, but you know what that means, an increase in the chances for mud slides and more destruction. I have always wondered how these people could afford fire insurance or are there certain stipulations to the fire insurance policy?
Words of wisdom from Lucille Ball: A man who correctly guesses a woman’s age may be smart but he’s not very bright.

Your weatherman,

Richard Klodt

UPCOMING EVENTS
Winter Arrangement Classes at Stam Garden Center and Nursery: Saturday, December 1st at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm. Call to register: 641-672-1437.

EDUCATIONAL FEATURE
Selection and Care of Christmas Trees

By Richard Jauron, Department of Horticulture (from November 14, 2014 issue of Horticulture & Home Pest News)

Artificial Christmas trees are convenient and attractive. However, for many individuals the holiday season wouldn’t be complete without a real (cut) Christmas tree. For those who prefer a cut Christmas tree, a few simple guidelines will help insure an enjoyable and safe holiday season.

A few decisions should be made before going out to buy a Christmas tree. Decide where you are going to place the tree in the home. Be sure to choose a location away from heat sources, such as a fireplace or radiator. Also, decide on the size (height and width) of the tree you want.

Christmas trees may be purchased from cut-your-own tree farms or as cut trees in commercial lots. A list of tree farms in your area can be found at the Iowa Christmas Tree Growers Association website at http://www.iowachristmastrees.com/.

Tree species commonly available at tree farms and commercial lots in Iowa include Scotch pine, white pine, red pine, Fraser fir, balsam fir, Canaan fir, Douglas fir, white spruce, and Colorado spruce.

Trees cut and purchased at cut-your-own tree farms are obviously fresh. Carefully check trees at a commercial tree lot to insure the freshness of previously cut trees. Freshness can be determined with a few simple tests. Gently run your hand over a branch. The needles on a fresh tree will be pliable. Those on a dry tree will be brittle. Another test is to lift the tree by the trunk and lightly bounce the butt on the ground. Heavy needle drop indicates a dry tree. A fresh tree will drop only a few needles.

When looking for a tree, select one that has a straight trunk. A tree with a straight trunk will be much easier to set upright in the stand. Check the diameter of the trunk to make sure it will fit in your stand. A tree with a bare side may be fine if you intend to place it in a corner or against a wall.

If you don’t intend to set up the Christmas tree immediately, place the tree in a cool, sheltered location. An unheated garage or shed is often a suitable storage site. (The sun and wind dries out trees stored outdoors.) Put the butt of the tree in a bucket of water. Remove an inch or more from the bottom of the trunk before bringing the tree in the house. A fresh cut facilitates water uptake.
Indoors, immediately place and secure the tree in its stand and fill the reservoir with water. Check the water supply as least twice a day and add water as needed. Promptly remove the tree when it begins to dry and drop needles.

**MUSINGS OF THE MONTH**
I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. I am feeling like it is going to be a long, long winter—especially since it hasn’t even started yet and we have had 2 significant snow events! Luckily we had several great days to get a few more fall garden chores completed before the blizzard! I decided at the last minute to cut my semi-dead viburnums back to the base. I was thinking that maybe they would get new shoots, but the dead branches were ugly and I didn’t want to look at them all winter.

Best wishes for the holidays! Let’s hope that the weather for Christmas and New Year is more favorable for travel than the end of the Thanksgiving weekend.

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