

VOL 3 ISSUE 5-October 2026

ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

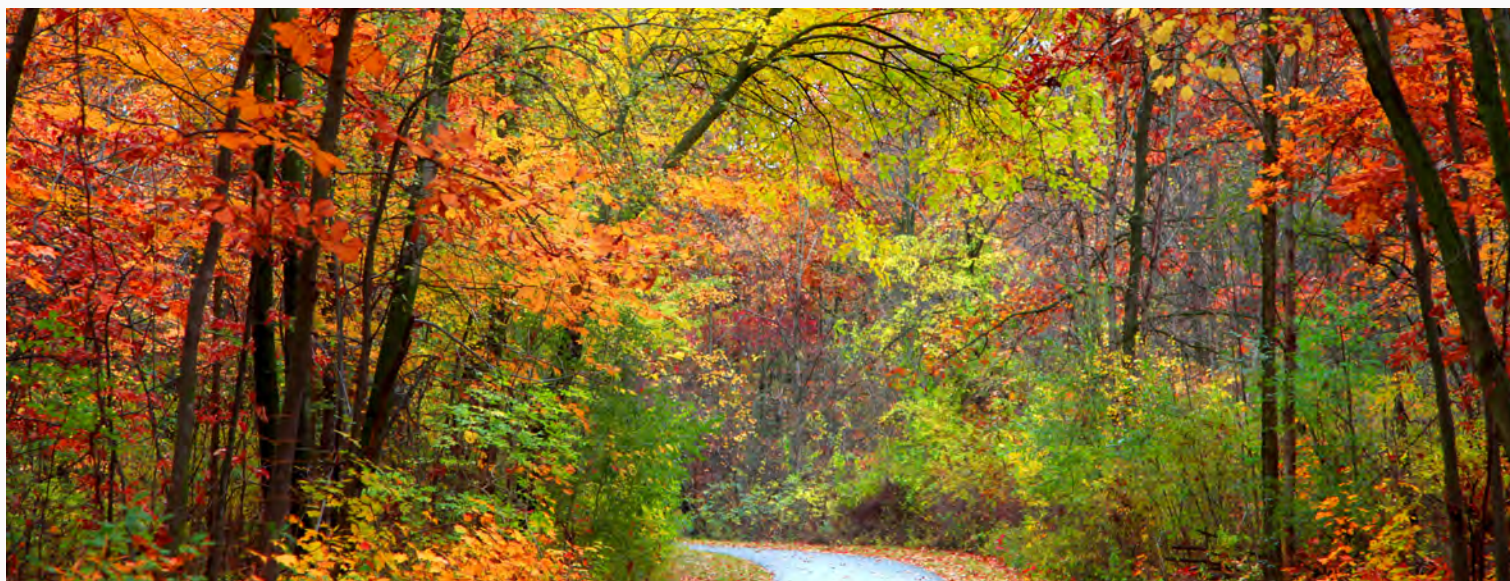
Extension Master Volunteers' Newsletter
Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties

October

The summer goes by so quickly and we have moved into the autumn season. Hopefully, you are able to be out enjoying these beautiful fall days.

Even though the growing season is ending, we have a lot of opportunities for volunteering and education still ahead in 2026. Take time to enjoy a beautiful day on a mindfulness hike in at Big Creek Park, attend the Edible Mushroom DIY workshop, share native seeds or plants at the Conservation@Home seed share event or share time learning with each other at one of the monthly Master Gardener or Master Naturalist meetings. We look forward to seeing you out and about this fall.

Nicole Flowers—Kimmerle
Horticulture Educator





Why Are Fall Colors So Brilliant Some Years and Dull Others?

by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, ILRiverHort

The science behind autumn color and trees to consider for your landscape.

Why are fall colors spectacular some years and disappointing the next? The answer lies in a combination of weather, tree biology, and even tree health. Discover the science behind autumn's colorful display and learn which trees and shrubs can bring brilliant fall color to your own landscape.

[READ MORE](#)



Grow your own apple orchard and enjoy the bounty

by Jennifer Bass, MG, MN, C@H

Growing up on a farm, Jennifer Bass looked forward to the family orchard's apple harvest each year, especially the apple dumplings for birthday celebrations.

In this personal reflection, she shares those memories along with practical tips for selecting, planting, and caring for apple trees in Illinois. Whether you're considering your first tree or expanding a home orchard, her advice can help you enjoy homegrown apples for years to come.

[READ MORE](#)

The best fall landscapes do more than look good. Native trees and shrubs provide berries, seeds, and insect habitat that support birds and other wildlife throughout the season.





Conservation@Home Native Seed & Plant Share

Celebrate native plants and connect with fellow enthusiasts at the Conservation@Home Native Seed and Plant Share. Participants are encouraged to bring labeled native seeds or plant starts to share while networking with Conservation@Home members and Illinois Extension staff. Attendees can learn more about the Conservation@Home program, explore certification opportunities for their own landscapes, and enjoy a potluck meal with other native plant enthusiasts.

October 29 at 5:30 pm

Peoria Public Library North Branch, 3001 W Grand Pkwy, Peoria

This event also includes a fun nocturnal creature costume contest to highlight upcoming Conservation@Home programs.

[READ MORE](#)



Edible Mushroom Grow Kit Workshop

Curious about growing your own mushrooms? Join us for a hands-on workshop exploring the basics of mushroom cultivation, from growing conditions and substrates to the fascinating science of fungi. Participants will assemble and take home their own mushroom grow kit, complete with a blue oyster mushroom culture, and gain practical experience growing edible mushrooms at home.

October 20 at 5:30 pm

Illinois Extension 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin

Cost: \$60

[REGISTER](#)

Master Gardener Annual Conference

See highlights from the 2026 Illinois Master Gardener Annual Conference, including this year's volunteer award winners.

[Photo Album](#)



Greater Peoria Farm Show

Help represent Illinois Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalists at the Greater Peoria Farm Show on December 1, 2 and 3! Extension will have an information table and a fun Plinko game to engage visitors and share educational resources.

Volunteers are needed each day for a morning shift (9 am to noon) or an afternoon shift (noon to 3 pm).

[Sign Up to Volunteer](#)



Mindfulness Hikes

Join us for the last Mindfulness Hike in 2026.

Slow down, step outside, and reconnect with the present moment. Our guided Mindfulness Hikes offer gentle walks that help you unwind, tune into your senses, and enjoy the natural world with intention. Each month features a new scenic location and simple practices to support presence, calm, and curiosity.

October 14 at 9 am- [Mindfulness Hike at Big Creek Park](#)

Contact Local Extension Office

Phone

Fulton 309-547-3711

Mason 309-543-3308

Peoria 309-685-3140

Tazewell 309-347-6614





Herbal Garden Tea Party

Discover how homegrown herbs, flowers, and leaves can elevate your tea experience at Brewing Botanicals: Enhancing Tea with the Power of Plants. Master Gardener, Karen Corrigan will share tips for growing, harvesting, and blending botanicals for flavorful herbal infusions. Participants will enjoy a hands-on experience creating their own custom herbal tea blend to take home. All supplies are provided, and participants are welcome to bring their favorite dried herbs to share.

November 13 at 1 pm

Illinois Extension 15411 N. IL 100 Highway, Lewistown

Cost: \$5 per person

Register by: November 6

[REGISTER](#)



Kickapoo Creek Canoe Clean-Up

Join us for an afternoon of learning and stewardship along Kickapoo Creek Canoe Clean-Up. Hear from the Friends of Kickapoo Creek about local restoration efforts, then take part in an optional cleanup float to help remove litter and improve wildlife habitat and water quality.

Participants are encouraged to bring their own canoe or kayak, and a limited number of canoes are available to borrow.

October 24 at 11 am

Bartonville Commuter Parking Lot, 5703 S. Washington St., Bartonville

[REGISTER](#)



GivePulse Reminder

Please record your volunteer and continuing education hours in GivePulse by October 31 for the annual report.

Hours entered after October 31 still count for state reporting.

Need Help?
Contact Karen Weigelt at kweigelt@illinois.edu.



Wild Neighbors: An Inside Look at Wildlife Rehabilitation

Get a behind-the-scenes look at wildlife rehabilitation with Master Naturalist and Master Gardener, Carla Presnell. Explore how licensed rehabilitators care for injured and orphaned wildlife, what to do when you encounter an animal in need, and how these dedicated individuals support native wildlife. The program also includes time to connect with fellow volunteers.

November 15 at 2 pm
Illinois Extension 1505 Valle Vista Blvd., Pekin

[REGISTER](#)



2026 Master Naturalist Class

A new group of Illinois Master Naturalists has completed their training and is ready to make a difference through education, stewardship, and service. Throughout the program, participants explored the natural history and ecology of Illinois while connecting with their classmate and active Master Naturalists. Enjoy photos from their training experience in the online album.

[Photos](#)

Mark your calendars for
**Extension Master Naturalist
2026 Continuing Education**



October 24
November 15



Illinois Extension | Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell



Floral Design Workshops

Join us for a hands-on series of Seasonal Floral Design Workshops led by Christine Wright, Hy-Vee Floral Manager. Each session highlights a new seasonal style, with all supplies provided and plenty of practical tips for creating beautiful arrangements at home. Christine shares her tips and tricks for creating gorgeous floral designs for every season. Registration and prepayment are required to reserve your space.

December 4 at 1 pm
U of I Extension, Fulton County
Register by Nov. 27
Cost: \$20

[REGISTER](#)



Illinois Green Connections: End of Year Brunch

Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Conservation@Home members are invited to gather for the annual Green Connections Holiday Celebration Brunch.

Join fellow volunteers and conservation-minded community members to celebrate the accomplishments and experiences of 2026 while enjoying a catered brunch and time to connect. Registration is required, and space is limited.

December 11 at 10 am
Tazewell County Health Department, 21306 IL-9 Tremont
Register by: December 10

[REGISTER](#)

Illinois Green Connections Events

Green Connections brings together Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Conservation@Home members to learn, share ideas, and strengthen our stewardship of Illinois' natural spaces.





Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar

October

- **October 10, 10am** - Nature Journaling, Spring Creek Preserve, East Peoria. go.illinois.edu/journal4
- **October 14, 9am** - Wellness Hike, Big Creek Park, Canton go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessBigCreek26
- **October 15 & 16** - Master Naturalist Conference.
- **October 20, 1:30 pm**- Speak for the Trees: Community Advocacy for Urban Forests. Four Seasons webinar. Register at go.illinois.edu/fourseasonswebinartrees26
- **October 20, 5:30 pm**- Edible Mushroom Grow Kit Workshop, Illinois Extension, 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin. Register at: go.illinois.edu/DIYMushroom26
- **October 16, 5:30 pm**- Year End Wrap Up and Potluck. Illinois Extension, 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin
- **October 28, 1:30 pm**- Native Plants and Seed collection. Tawny Oaks/Singing Woods, 715 W Singing Woods Rd, Edelstein
- **October 29, 5:30 pm**- C@H: Native Seed and Plant Share. Peoria Public Library, North Branch 3001 W Grand Pkwy, Peoria. Register at: go.illinois.edu/NativeSwap26

November

- **November 4 at noon**-Women Owning Woodlands Lunch & Learn Webinar. Sign up for notification at [Women Owning Woodlands Email List](#)
- **November 13, 1 pm**- Herbal Garden Tea Party. Illinois Extension, Fulton Branch Office 15411 N IL 100 Highway, Lewistown. Register at go.illinois.edu/HerbalTea26
- **November 15, 2 pm**- Wild Neighbors: An Inside Look at Wildlife Rehabilitation, Illinois Extension, 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin
- **November 18, 4 pm**- Year End Wrap Up and Potluck, Illinois Extension, 4810 N. Sheridan, Peoria

December

- **December 1,2,3, 9 am to 3 pm**-Greater Peoria Farm Show. Peoria Civic Center 201 SW Jefferson Ave, Peoria. [Sign up to Volunteer](#)
- **December 4, 1 pm**-Floral Design Workshop Series: Winter Centerpiece Grandeur, Illinois Extension, Fulton Branch Office 15411 N IL 100 Highway, Lewistown. Register at go.illinois.edu/WinterFloral26
- **December 11, 10 am**- Green Connections: Holiday Celebration Brunch, Tazewell County Health Department 21306 IL-9, Tremont. Register at go.illinois.edu/GCyearend26

March

March 13, 8 am- Gardners' BIG Day, Cuba High School, 20325 N State Rte 97, Cuba

Details

Check online for more information about upcoming events

[Illinois Extension FMPT Events](#)

[U of I Extension ILRiverHort Facebook Page](#)



Volunteer Opportunities

- **Morton Giving Garden:** **Pam Scott**, Monday & Thursday am.
- **Tazewell County Health Department Garden:** **Trudy Yazujian**, Tuesday & Friday, 8 am - noon.
- **Canton Giving Garden:** **Gayle Blodgett**
- **4-H Learning Garden:** **May Bach**, Tuesday & Thursday 9 - 11 am.
- **Rt 150 Garden:** **Polly Wagner**, Tuesday from 7 - 9 am.
- **Kim St John Butterfly Habitat:** **Randy Huber** and **Louise Bassett**, Wednesday from 8:30 - 11:30 am.
- **ICC Demonstration Garden:** **Jennifer Bass**, Tuesday 9 - 11:30 am.
- **Morton Public Library:** **Janine Donahue** and **Sarah Smith**
- **Jubilee Butterfly Garden:** **Patricia Melaik**, Thursday 9 - noon.
- **St. Anne's Garden of Hope:** **Mike Brooks**, Please sign up on our [website](#).
- **Peoria Academy's Vegetable Garden:** **Laura Hertz**, Wednesday 9 - 11 am.
- **Peoria Zoo Pollinator Garden:** **May Bach**, Tuesday &/or Wednesday am.
- **Friendship House:** **Kendra Belk**
- **Native Plant Demonstration and Herb Gardens:** **Ainsley Olsen** and **Brittany Chambers**. Every other Monday at 9 am.
- **Spring Creek Work Days:** **Mike McGraw**, 2nd Wednesday of the month.
- **Elwood Work Days:** **Ed Coleman**, 3rd Sunday & 3rd Wednesday of each month, 9 am - noon.
- **Donovan Park workday:** **David Pittman**,
- **Rocky Glen Work Days:** **David Pittman**
- **Gardening Helpline:** **Anne Blindt** or **Debbie Lane**
- **Conservation@Home Evaluator:** **Ellen Denler** or **Brittany Chambers**
- **Speaker's Network:** **Karen Weigelt** and **Fran Stroemer**
- **Newsletters:** **Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle** and **Jennifer Bass**

Women Owning Woodlands: Lunch and Learn

Join a monthly virtual Lunch & Learn series focused on woodland stewardship, conservation, and natural resources. November's program will feature a panel of experts answering participant questions. Although designed with women woodland owners in mind, the series is open to anyone interested in caring for woodlands.

[Sign up for Notifications](#)

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Work Days

Check with project lead about specific dates, work days can change due to conflicts and weather issues.



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