

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Rachel Driver moves from volunteer to Extension horticulture coordinator

It did not take long for [Rachel Driver](#) to become inspired with the work that happens at University of Illinois Extension. In the fall of 2024, she attended the horticulture core education program and a few months later she was hired as the new horticulture program coordinator serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be a part of Extension," Rachel explained. "It allows me to utilize my love for Mother Nature with my passion for education. I am a firm believer that we are all lifelong learners, and the world is our classroom."

Rachel has nearly a decade of experience working for [Peoria Public Schools](#) as a primary education teacher, tutor, and data specialist. Her professional experience teaching, communicating with youth and adults, and maintaining all of the details that goes into managing a classroom translates perfectly with her new role. Rachel's top priority is supporting the 150 [Extension Master Gardener](#) volunteers who serve the local four-county unit.

"Our Master Gardener team is one of the largest in the state," noted Horticulture Educator [Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle](#). "They are very engaged volunteers and we want to provide as much support to them as possible. Rachel's knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for people and horticulture are perfect for this job."

"Horticulture is a work of art and heart," noted Rachel. "I am consistently amazed by the work that is being done by the Master Gardeners and [Master Naturalists](#) throughout Fulton, Mason, Tazewell, and Peoria counties. It is such a gift to witness them all!"

"One of the projects areas I hope to help expand and support is the network of school gardens through the communities in our counties."

Since her first day on the job in February, Rachel has enjoyed working with the [Gardeners' BIG Day](#) planning committee, writing the Green Connections and [Conservation@Home newsletters](#), meeting the volunteers, and supporting Nicole with the variety of horticulture education that she does.

Rachel is a native of Pekin. She earned her associate degree at [Illinois Central College](#) and bachelor and master degrees at [Illinois State University](#). Outside of the office, she can be found appreciating time with her family and friends, adoring plants and animals, working on the cottage garden of her dreams, or upkeeping her vintage home.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

Rachel Driver became an Extension Master Gardener and loved it so much she joined the staff as the horticulture program coordinator.

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